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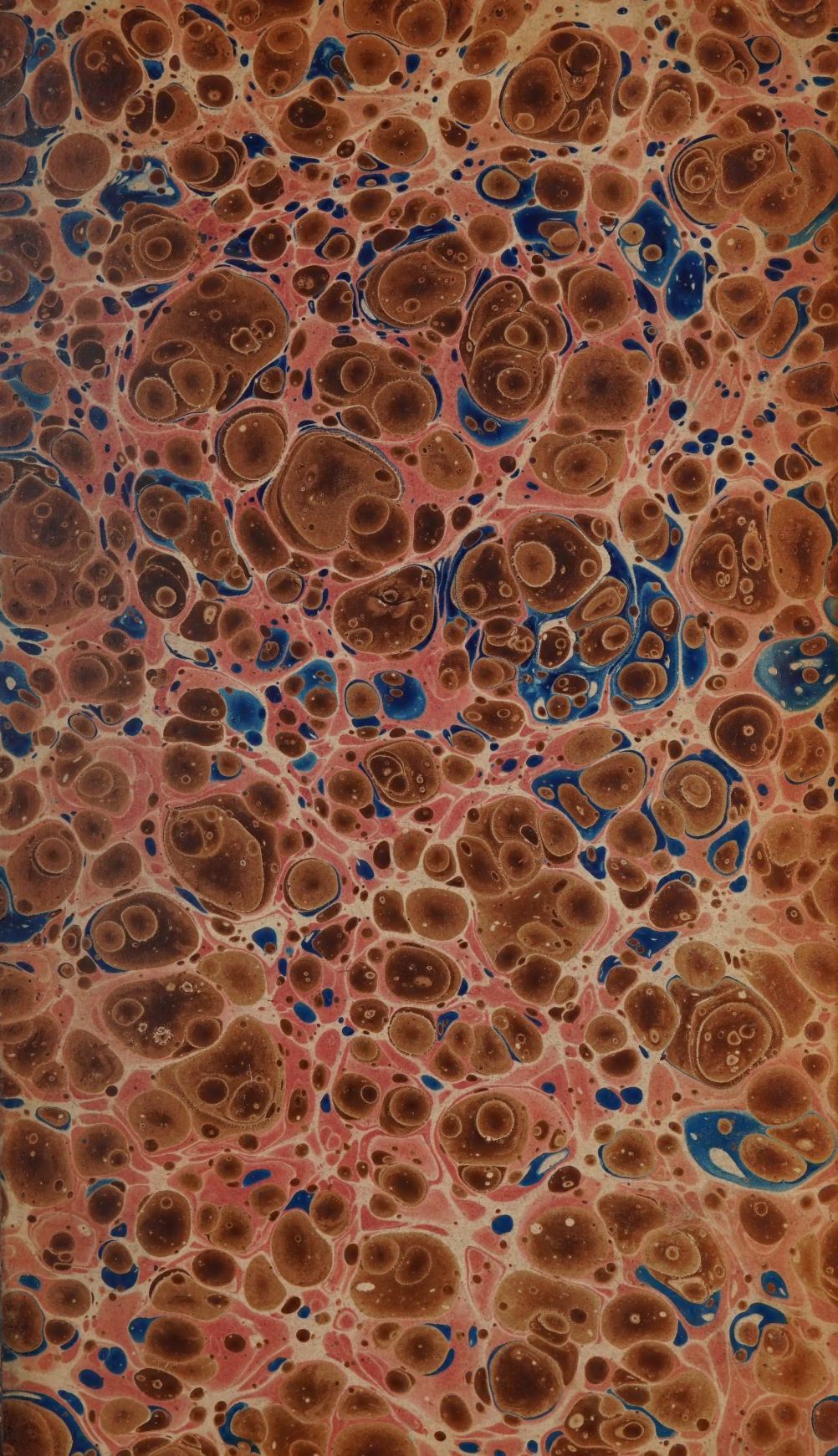
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LECTURES ON THEOLOGY

REV. JOHN DICK, DD

Mr. Henry Green  
Princeton  
1843



Mr. Henry Green  
Francis  
1859



# LECTURES ON THEOLOGY.

BY THE LATE

✓  
REV. JOHN DICK, D.D.

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GLASGOW; AND PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY TO THE  
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PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF HIS SON.

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# LECTURES ON THEOLOGY.

## LECTURE LII.

### ON THE MESSIAH.

Predictions of the Messiah prior to the Appearance of Christ—Their Import—Evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah.

WE have seen that Jesus Christ is the Surety and Mediator of the New Covenant; and, in speaking of him in these characters, it was impossible to avoid references to the mysterious constitution of his person. This, however, is a subject so important, as to be entitled to distinct consideration, both because it is the foundation upon which the whole scheme of redemption depends, and because some men of corrupt minds have, in all ages, and in various forms, exerted themselves to overthrow it. But, before we enter upon it, it will be proper to attend to the notices which were given of the Saviour to the church prior to his manifestation in the flesh, and then to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah.

As God was not pleased to send his Son into the world immediately after the fall of our first parents, but to defer his mission till the fulness of time, it seemed good to his wisdom to give before-hand such information respecting him, as would support the faith and hope of his people, and enable them to know him when he should actually appear. It could not have been supposed that, in the ancient Scriptures, which record the divine dispensations to the descendants of the patriarchs, and the other nations of the world, there would be no mention of an event more wonderful and interesting than the rise and fall of kingdoms and empires. We find, accordingly, that, as he is brought forward to view almost at the commencement of the sacred volume of the Jews, so it closes with a renewed prediction of his approach, and a delightful picture of the happiness which awaited our race, when “the Sun of righteousness should arise upon them with healing in his wings.”\*

The first notice of the Saviour was given on the afternoon of the day on which our first parents transgressed, and before they were expelled from paradise. It was included in the sentence pronounced upon their seducer; and while it foretold his destruction, implied a promise of their deliverance from his power. “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.”† It is plain, that the person here announced was to be the adversary and the conqueror of the serpent, or the devil, who, by the instrumentality of that animal, successfully tempted our first parents, and that he was to be a partaker of their nature. It would be absurd to consider the passage as relating to the enmity which literally subsists between the serpentine race and ours;

\* Mal. iv. 2.

† Gen. iii. 15.



nor is there any reason to understand it generally of a hostility which would afterwards arise between them and the devil, with whom they had now joined in a confederacy against God. The seed of the woman denotes an individual, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom this designation is peculiarly applicable, because he has descended from her in a different manner from all her other posterity. In reference to him, an equivalent expression is used, when it is said, that, "In the fulness of the time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."\* To be made of a woman, and to be the seed of the woman, evidently signify the same thing; and hence, we may conclude this to be the import of the prediction, that the future antagonist of the serpent would be conceived and born in a miraculous manner. He is not called the seed of the man, although he was as much a descendant of Adam as of Eve, and his genealogy is traced up to him in the third chapter of Luke, because he was not derived from him in the ordinary way. He is the seed of the woman in an exclusive sense, because his mother was a virgin.

The next notice of the Messiah was given to Abraham, when God said to him, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."† It may be supposed that this promise may be understood in a lower sense, as foretelling the benefit which mankind would derive from his posterity, who were destined to be the original depositories of divine revelation, and from whom it was to be afterwards diffused over the various regions of the earth. But an apostle has shown us that it should be applied principally or solely to the Messiah. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."‡ By this second notice, the people of God obtained some new information. It not only repeated what was already known, that the Messiah would be a man, a partaker of the same nature with the patriarch, but it farther taught, that he should be a Jew; because it was expressly said, that "in Isaac this seed should be called," or that he should spring from Abraham, not by Ishmael, but by Isaac. The nation was specified, in which he should appear; and as they were thus excited to look for him, his relation to them was the ground on which that system of typical services was established, which was afterwards introduced by the ministry of Moses.

The next prediction to which I shall direct your attention, is contained in the following words: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."§ Although it is agreed among Christians, that the Messiah is the person to whom this prophecy refers, yet there is a difference of opinion with respect to the import of the name or title by which he is described. Some suppose that שילה, *Schiloh*, is derived from שלח, which signifies *to send*, the final ה, *heth*, being changed into ה, *he*, and, consequently, that שילה, signifies *He that is sent*. In the Vulgate, it is translated *Qui mittendus est*, he who is to be sent. Our Saviour is elsewhere termed the angel or messenger of Jehovah, and often speaks of his mission in the New Testament: "Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?"|| Others are of opinion, that it is a derivative of שילח, which signifies *to be quiet or tranquil*; and that שילה, *Schiloh*, is the peaceable one, or the giver of peace; a character which is, with the greatest propriety, given to our Saviour, on account not only of the gentle virtues by which he was distinguished, but of the peace which he has happily effected between God and man by his mediation. It may be added, that, as his religion inculcates brotherly love, so it actually creates it in the

\* Gal. iv. 4. † Gen. xxii. 18. ‡ Gal. iii. 16. § Gen. xlix. 10. || John x. 36.

hearts of his genuine disciples. Under its influence, in the figurative language of prophecy, "The wolf dwells with the lamb, and the leopard lies down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together."\* But, whatever is the true import of the title, as there is no doubt respecting the person to whom it belongs, the words now under consideration convey this additional information with regard to the Messiah, that he was to arise from the tribe of Judah, which should subsist as a distinct political body, till the time of his appearance. This prophecy will again come under review, in the subsequent part of the lecture.

I proceed to lay before you another passage in which the family is pointed out, which should have the honour of claiming him as one of its members. "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne."† I acknowledge, that there is nothing in these words themselves which would justify us in applying them to the Messiah, and that, without bringing the light of other parts of Scripture to bear upon them, they might be considered merely as a promise, that the royal authority, with which David had been invested, should descend to his children in a long succession. But, in the mind of a person who is acquainted with the Scripture, no doubt will remain that the fruit of David's body is that illustrious descendant, whom the Jews welcomed when he entered Jerusalem with this acclamation, "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."‡ There is a manifest allusion to the passage in the words of the angel who announced the birth of our Saviour to his mother. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of David for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."§ I may add the prediction of Isaiah. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever."|| The seventy-second Psalm begins with a prayer of David for himself and his son; but Solomon, if he thought of him at all, immediately vanishes from his mind, and he goes on to describe, in the sublimest strains, the future glories of the Messiah's reign. This is the king to whose manifestation the prophecies directed the attention of the Jews, and under whose administration they were taught to expect that substantial and unfading felicity, of which earthly things were only a shadow. And as he was the Son of David by way of eminence, and was appointed to sit upon his throne, he sometimes receives in prophecy the name of that monarch, of whom he is the antitype. "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."¶

Having seen that, in his human nature, the Messiah was to be a member of the family of David, we shall find, in the following prophecy, something still more specific. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."\*\* The Messiah would be a miraculous child, born of one of the daughters of David, according to a peculiar law. The miracle consisted, not in the exertion of extraordinary power, but in the manner of his conception; for the difference between a miracle and a common event is, that in the latter the hand of God is concealed from superficial observers by the means which it employs, whereas, in the former it is openly revealed. The birth of every child is effected by the same power which formed the body of our Saviour in the womb of the Virgin Mary; but in the latter case, it strikes

\* Is. xi. 6.

† Ps. cxxxii. 11.

‡ Matt. xxi. 9.

§ Luke i. 32, 33.

|| Is. ix. 7.

¶ Hos. iii. 5.

\*\* Is. vii. 14.



us more, because it is unaccompanied with the usual circumstances. Omnipotence appears unveiled, and admiration is excited by the naked display of it.

It will be proper to inquire into the reason of this miracle; and we feel desirous to know how it came to pass, that the human nature of our Saviour was so different from that of all other men, in its perfect exemption from moral impurity. The common opinion is, that its holiness was the consequence of his being born of a virgin; and it is explained in the following manner. Let us look back to the introduction of sin, and attend to the way in which it is propagated. In consequence of the federal relation between Adam and his posterity, his sin is chargeable upon them, and is transmitted to them as they successively come into existence. The nature which they derive from him is corrupt. They are at once guilty and polluted. From this law of transmission there has been no exception since the beginning of the world. The individuals of the human race have been distinguished by important differences in their talents, their dispositions, and their actions; but all have been tainted with sin, because they have all borne the same relation to that one man, with whom they were appointed to stand or fall. He was the representative of his natural posterity, or of all who should descend from him in consequence of the blessing pronounced upon the man and the woman: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth." In the representation of Adam every person was included, who was to be born according to the law of generation then established. Had our blessed Lord been born according to the same law, he also would have partaken of the general corruption; and being himself a sinner, would have been disqualified to be the Saviour of sinners. Now, the design of his miraculous conception was, to secure the innocence of his human nature, that it might be fitted for the high honour of union to his divine person, and for the holy services which were to be performed for the salvation of men. He was born of a virgin, that he might be an immaculate child. He was derived from Adam in a new channel, by which depravity could not be transmitted.

But it is a more satisfactory view of the subject to consider, that the miraculous birth of our Saviour was the consequence of a promise made after Adam had ceased to be a federal head, the promise, namely, respecting "the seed of the woman." He was not related to Adam while he continued the representative of his descendants, and was not, therefore, subject to the effects of his fall. His relation to him, if I may speak so, was incidental and conditional, depending upon the failure of Adam to fulfil the terms of the covenant. Christ was one added to the human race, after it had been brought into new circumstances, and he was not therefore bound by the law under which it was originally placed. It was not by an act of power in his miraculous conception, but by an act of justice, that he was exempted from the common depravity. He had no connexion with its cause; he was not more included in the representation of Adam than the angels of heaven; he would not have been born at all, if the covenant had not been broken; and that it is not our simple descent from Adam, which is the reason of the corruption of our nature, but our relation to him as our federal head, is evident from this consideration, that only his first sin is imputed to us, and all his subsequent sins were charged upon himself alone.

This I consider as the true account of the purity of the human nature of our Saviour. It was not owing simply to his being born of a virgin, although this is commonly assigned as the cause, but to his not being included in the representation of Adam. But all were included in it who were derived from him by the ordinary mode of continuing the species; and hence it was necessary that, in order to distinguish him, our Lord, who never was in Adam as a federal head, should descend from him in a miraculous manner.

We have seen that the notices of the Messiah in his human character, be

came clearer and more particular in every stage ; but the ancient church was favoured with still more ample information. His divinity was the subject of revelation, as well as his humanity, in a variety of passages. I shall mention, in the first place, the prophecy which we have just now considered, and in which, after it is foretold that he should be born of a virgin, it is added that his name should be called Immanuel. This is a compound Hebrew word, which signifies "God with us." It is not meant that he should actually bear this name, but that he should be what it imports. Accordingly, he never was called Immanuel by any evangelist or apostle ; but he truly was God in our nature, manifested for our salvation. His divinity was also declared in the following words : "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ; and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."\* He is a child, and the mighty God ; born, yet possessed of eternal existence. To the same purpose is this other prediction ; "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and judgment in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely ; and this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness."† The original word is JEHOVAH, which is the incommunicable name, and, being applied to our Saviour, intimates that he is the living, self-existent one. Let it be observed that, while this passage asserts his divinity, it points out the inestimable benefit which would accrue to mankind from his manifestation in their nature, as through him they should obtain the blessing of justification, and by his obedience many should be made righteous.

It would be tedious to refer to all the notices of the Messiah which are contained in the Old Testament. As I have laid before you predictions and declarations respecting his person, so I might proceed to collect testimonies to the whole work which he would perform, to his humiliation, his sufferings, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his power, the progress and final triumph of his religion. But, passing these, I observe, that an expectation was excited of a great deliverer, who would appear in a future age to accomplish the redemption of the people of God. He was known by various titles, as the Redeemer, the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts, He that should come, and the Messiah. This last title signifies the anointed one, as *Christ* does in Greek ; and was given to him to denote his divine appointment to his office, and his qualifications for it. In ancient times, the pouring of oil upon them was a rite used in the consecration of kings, priests, and prophets. In allusion to it he is called the Messiah, because he was set apart to the office of Mediator by God himself, and was endowed with all the gifts and graces which were necessary to the performance of its duties. Hence he is said to have been anointed with the Holy Ghost, whom God gave not to him by measure. The notions entertained by the Jews at the time of his manifestation, were exceedingly erroneous. They seem to have lost sight of his divinity, and to have imagined that he would be a mere man. They had overlooked the prophetic descriptions of his sufferings, and fixed their attention upon the splendid imagery in which his triumph was announced ; they waited with impatience for the advent of a great temporal monarch, and were ready to march under his banners to victory and glory. Their misapprehension of his character was not owing to the obscurity or ambiguity of prophecy, but to their own carnal minds, which dwelt with fondness upon those parts of the description which flattered their passions and sordid views, and turned away with disgust from the lowly scenes amidst which his career was to commence.

\* Is. ix. 6.

† Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.



They had no wish to be saved from any enemies, but those by whose power their nation was oppressed; and set no value upon any blessings, but such as would minister to their sensuality and ambition. Hence, when the Messiah did come, they rejected him. Rulers and people, learned and unlearned, joined in an outcry against him as guilty of presumption in claiming this character; and the false charge has been transmitted from father to son during a long series of years. The mention of his name still kindles the rage of the Jews; and, with impious lips, they pour curses upon him, leaving it to the Gentiles to hail him in the language of their fathers, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Let us, therefore, proceed to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah.

It is evident that the Messiah must have long since appeared, since the time fixed by prophecy for his manifestation is past, as even the Jews are constrained to acknowledge. It is a pitiful evasion to allege, as they do, that his coming has been delayed on account of their sins. In what place of scripture is it suspended upon their repentance and obedience? Can any thing be more absurd than to assign, as a reason for not sending him, the only cause for which God promised to send him at all, namely, the sins of men, which were to be expiated by his immaculate sacrifice? "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come."\* But the sceptre has departed from Judah, the civil constitution of the Jews has been overthrown, and for many ages they have remained without a priest or a king. At the time when he whom we call the Messiah was born, they were under the dominion of Herod, an Idumean, but a proselyte to their religion, and therefore accounted one of themselves; their ancient forms were retained, they were governed by their own laws, and had rulers of their own nation. The sceptre had not departed, but it was at the point of departing; and this, therefore, was the critical moment at which the prophecies must either be fulfilled, or fail for ever; for, before the century expired, Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by the Romans, the people were expelled from their country, and scattered over the face of the earth. The dispersion of the Jews, which has lasted for more than seventeen hundred years, might convince them that the Messiah is come, and that they look in vain for another.

It was foretold that he should come while the second temple was standing. "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts."† These words were addressed to the Jews, who, after their return from the Babylonian captivity, were much discouraged by the difficulties which they experienced in building the temple, and by its inferiority to that which was erected by Solomon. It is predicted that it should be more glorious, not, however, by its external magnificence, but by the personal presence of Him, of whom the Schechinah, or the bright cloud which rested on the propitiatory, was a figure. "The Lord, whom ye seek," said another prophet, "shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts."‡ The house which the Jews, after their restoration, constructed for the solemn worship of God, was repaired, and in a manner rebuilt, by Herod the Great, in whose reign our Saviour was born; but it was never called or accounted a new temple, because the work was carried on by degrees, and the regular service was not interrupted. Ages have elapsed since it was laid in ruins. It perished in the overthrow of the city by the Romans, its walls were levelled with the ground, its very foundation was turned up, and the prediction was literally ful-

\* Gen. xlix. 10.

† Hag. ii. 9.

‡ Mal. iii. 1.

filled, that not one stone should be left upon another. The Messiah, therefore, is come; and what the prophets had announced was accomplished, when the Son of Mary was presented to God in the temple, and afterwards in that place published the tidings of peace and salvation. The Jews saw only a man in homely attire, and without any worldly pretensions; but never was the temple the scene of such glory as now, when the God of the temple stood within its walls.

There is a prophecy in the book of Daniel, which fixes the time of his appearance with greater exactness. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.—And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."\* Different opinions have been entertained with respect to the commencement of these seventy weeks of years. According to Prideaux, who supports his opinion by many learned arguments, they are to be dated from the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, when a decree went forth from that monarch to Ezra, to restore the nation and church of the Jews; and the seven weeks, or forty-nine years, extend from that period to the time of Nehemiah, when the walls of Jerusalem were finished, and the affairs of the nation were settled. The sixty-two weeks, or four hundred and thirty-four years, fill up the interval between Nehemiah and the appearance of the Baptist; and the one week, or the last seven years, were employed in the ministration of John and our Saviour. In the course of that week, or rather in the latter half of it, he made the sacrifice and the oblation to cease by his own death, which fulfilled the types, and was followed by the abolition of the ceremonial law. It is evident from this prophecy, that the Messiah is come; and the evidence is so clear, that the Jews are thrown into the utmost perplexity by it, and not knowing what answer to give to the arguments of Christians, wish to preserve silence on the subject, and pronounce a curse upon the man who shall presume to calculate the weeks of Daniel.

That the Messiah, whose advent is past, is Jesus of Nazareth, may be proved by the exact correspondence between his character and history, and the particulars mentioned in prophecy. He was of the tribe of Judah and the family of David, as we learn from his genealogy in Matthew and Luke; and these points, I believe, have not been disputed. In legal reckoning he was the son of Joseph, but in reality he was the son of Mary. The descent of Joseph from David is traced in Matthew, and of Mary in Luke, although her name does not occur in it. In this way we account for the difference in the two genealogical tables, which, while both point out David as his progenitor, do not agree in one particular with respect to the intermediate persons. Now, unless we were to suppose the evangelists to have written at random, this difference is a proof that, having the same object in view, namely, to show that he was of the royal family, they prove it, the one by the lineage of his reputed father, and the other by that of his mother.

The place of his birth was Bethlehem, according to the prediction of Micah: "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the

\* Dan. ix. 24—27.



thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."\* And how was this prophecy fulfilled? Joseph and Mary had taken up their residence in Nazareth of Galilee, which lay at least seventy miles north from Jerusalem, while Bethlehem was situated some miles to the south. Had the pious pair, when the time drew near that Mary should be delivered, gone intentionally to the appointed place, the truth of prophecy would have been established by their voluntary agency. But it does not appear that they had formed such a design, or that the propriety of it had ever occurred to them. God had purposed to accomplish his word, not by the instrumentality of persons who should knowingly co-operate with him, but by a man who was ignorant of prophecy, and had never heard of the Messiah. Augustus, sitting on the throne of the Roman world, issues a decree that all his subjects should be taxed or enrolled. The design of Cæsar is to replenish his treasury with their silver and gold, or to ascertain their number and wealth, that he may be acquainted with his resources against any future emergency. The design of God is to bring Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, to which the descendants of David were commanded to repair, that their names might be inserted in the family register. Augustus thought only of gratifying his avarice or ambition: God thought of fulfilling his word. We see the whole empire in motion, and thousands hastening, every man to his own city, at the command of their sovereign, and we are apt to look upon this mighty bustle merely as a political movement. But God is the prime mover, and his object is to conduct, without noise and without a miracle, two of the humblest of the emperor's subjects to a small city, in a distant province, because he had determined, and by the mouths of his prophets had foretold, that there the Messiah should be born.

As his birth corresponded, in all its circumstances, with the ancient predictions, so did every other particular in his history. Our limits will not permit me to enter into a minute detail. According to the descriptions of the prophets, there would be a wonderful mixture in his character, of humiliation and greatness, of suffering and triumph. To the Jews, who have adopted false notions respecting his person and work, the language of the Old Testament is a riddle which they are sadly puzzled to explain; and hence some of their doctors have had recourse to the supposition of two Messiahs, to whom they assign the different parts of the description, as it seems impossible that they should admit of an application to the same individual. The one will be of the tribe of Ephraim, and will suffer and die; the other will be of the tribe of Judah, and will conquer and reign. I need not spend a single moment in refuting an hypothesis which is supported solely by the authority of men, whose comments on Scripture furnish the most pitiable display of ignorance (and stupidity) which the world ever saw. The character of Jesus of Nazareth affords a full solution of the difficulty, which has compelled them to have recourse to this wretched expedient. In his human nature, which, like ours, existed at first in the feebleness of infancy, and when it grew up to manhood was placed in circumstances of poverty and degradation, we see the fulfilment of what had been spoken concerning his humiliation; and the predictions of his greatness are accomplished in the dignity of his person, which, although made flesh, and concealed, in a great measure, from the eyes of men, retained the glory which it had with the Father before the world began. The incompatibility of his sufferings with his triumph, exists only in the dreams of the Jews. They were not simultaneous, but successive; his course commenced in darkness, and ended in light; he first became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, and then he obtained a name above every name, which all

\* Micah v. 2.

the powers of earth and heaven adore. He sits at the right hand of his Father, and his enemies are made his footstool. It were easy to show, by a reference to the prophecies, that there is not one particular of his sufferings recorded by the evangelists, which had not been pointed out beforehand; so that there is not a mere resemblance between the character of Jesus Christ, and that of the Messiah, but an exact coincidence; a coincidence in so many minute circumstances, that it could not have taken place by accident, and can be explained only by the identity of the person. It could not happen by chance that, agreeably to the ancient predictions, he was betrayed by one of his own followers, sold for thirty pieces of silver, buffeted, scourged, and spit upon; that he was condemned by the common consent of his own countrymen and the Gentiles; that he was put to death by crucifixion, which was not a Jewish punishment, and in company with criminals; that vinegar was given to him during his last sufferings, and his clothes were partly divided, and partly disposed of by lot; that he was insulted by his enemies, and, in particular, derided for his faith; that he was pierced with a spear; and finally, that, although it was intended to bury him along with his fellow-sufferers, his body was deposited in the sepulchre of a rich man. It would have required the co-operation of many persons to bring all these circumstances together by design; but as the agents had nothing in view, except to gratify their own feelings, we perceive the hand of God pointing out his own Son as the object of our faith, by fulfilling whatsoever his counsel had determined before to be done.

The messiahship of Jesus is farther manifest from the wonderful works which he performed. These prove that he was the expected Redeemer, because it was foretold that his advent should be signalized by works at once beneficent and divine: "Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."\* Hence the Jews expected such signs to be exhibited by the Messiah, as we learn from the words of some of them who believed in him, and said, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?"† But farther, these miracles prove him to be the Messiah, because they were express attestations to his character by his Father, in concurrence with whom he performed them. Hence he appeals to them as such: "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me."‡ And again, when the Jews were filled with indignation, and threatened to stone him, because he called himself the Son of God, he said to them, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him."§ The argument from miracles is well understood. Whether we consider those of our Saviour as performed by his own power, or by that of his Father, we arrive at the same conclusion. If they were performed by his own power, they prove that he was a divine person, to whose declarations concerning himself, implicit confidence is due. If they were performed by the power of his Father, they were his solemn attestation to the mission and doctrine of Christ. The allegation of the Jews, that his miracles were wrought by the assistance of evil spirits, had no better foundation than their ignorance and malignity; their ignorance—in supposing that those spirits could perform real miracles, and particularly such miracles as displayed an uncontrolled dominion

\* Is. xxxv. 4—6.     † John vii. 31.

‡ Ib. v. 36, 37.

§ Ib. x. 37, 38.



over all nature; their malignity—in ascribing to them, in opposition to the clearest dictates of reason and religion, works confessedly benevolent and holy. Certainly they would not have changed the course of nature to advance the glory of God, and the best interests of the human race. The answer of our Saviour must have carried conviction to any candid mind: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.”\*

The last argument by which we prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, is founded on the success of his religion. Let us reflect upon the circumstances in which it was promulgated. The Author of it was a person rejected by the only nation which expected the Messiah, and knew anything about his character; and, by that nation, he was not only pronounced to be a deceiver, but subjected to an ignominious death; so that there was every human probability that his name would be soon forgotten, or be remembered only as an object of reproach. No person could have dreamed, that a man who had been crucified as a malefactor in a distant province, would acquire such posthumous fame, as to be acknowledged and adored in the proud capital of Rome, and throughout the whole extent of the empire: whether we consider the nature of his doctrine, the persons who were employed in preaching it, or the opposition which it had to encounter, there was no likelihood that it would ever attain a footing in the world; and still less, that it would become the dominant religion. His doctrine was offensive to all classes of men, because it interfered with their opinions and usages, and called upon them, not only to adopt a new creed, but to engage in a new course of life to which they felt the utmost repugnance. The preachers could not give it the recommendation which a system derives from the rank and authority of its patrons, and the eloquence and learning which they enlist in its service; for they were of a low rank, and wanted all the qualifications which attract the notice and admiration of mankind. These were its only or its chief friends, when it appeared; all other men were leagued together as its enemies; the high, the mighty, and the wise; the rulers of states, and the interested ministers of the various superstitions which were established on the earth. In whatever way we may account for its wonderful success in circumstances which foreboded a certain failure, it supplies a new evidence in support of the claim of Jesus of Nazareth to the character of Messiah. If its success should be attributed to its intrinsic excellence, what but truth could take such hold of the minds and consciences of men, as to command their assent, notwithstanding strong motives to reject it? If we say that it was the effect of Divine power, exerted not only in miracles, but in secret influences upon the hearts of men, we acknowledge that the gospel is authenticated by the seal of God, and that he who preached it was his Son.

It deserves, in particular, to be considered, that the doctrine of Christ has been embraced by the Gentiles, and has caused a great revolution in the religious state of the world. The law of Moses was confined to the Jews, and a few proselytes who occasionally submitted to it; it was not intended to be universal, and its peculiar usages rendered it impossible that it should ever become the religion of mankind. But it was foretold of the Messiah, that he should be “a light to enlighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel;”† “the heathen would be given to him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession;”‡ “the isles would wait for his law;”§ and, “from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same, the name of God would be great among the Gentiles.”|| Of the fulfilment of

\* Luke xi. 17, 18. † Luke ii. 32. ‡ Ps. ii. 8. § Is. xlii. 4. || Mal. i. 11.

these predictions, there was no appearance for many centuries after they were uttered; but they have been fulfilled since the coming of our Saviour. As he gave a commission to the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, and they extended their labours beyond the limits of Judea, so his religion has ever since been professed by nations converted from heathenism. By the propagation of the gospel, the ancient idolatry has been overthrown, the knowledge of the true God has been diffused, and his worship established; his law has been promulgated as the only standard of right and wrong, and men have been taught to expect salvation only through his crucified Son. His kingdom does not yet extend "from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth;" but what has been accomplished, encourages us to hope for greater things; and we look forward to the time when he shall achieve the conquest of the whole earth, and be acknowledged and honoured as universal Lord.

These are the principal arguments by which we prove, against the Jews, that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah. I have omitted many particulars which might have been introduced under the general heads, and given you only a superficial view of the subject. What has been said, is sufficient to confirm our faith in this fundamental article of religion. The character of Messiah includes several offices to which our Saviour was anointed, and by the execution of which he accomplishes the salvation of his people. These we shall afterwards consider; but, in the mean time, it is necessary to inquire into the mysterious constitution of his person, by which he was qualified for those offices, and which is intimately connected with his messiahship, in the creed and confession of the Church. "We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."\* This important point will be the subject of the next lecture.

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## LECTURE LIII.

### ON THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

The human nature of Christ—Heretical opinions respecting it—Integrity of it—Its sinlessness—Necessity of his assumption of human nature—The constitution of his person, by the union of the divine and human natures—Effects of this hypostatical union.

HAVING proved that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah promised to the Fathers, I proceed to speak of his person, before I enter upon the consideration of his particular offices. To a Jew, it would seem that this inquiry is unnecessary, or may be reduced to narrow limits, it being enough to know his human descent, as there is no distinction between him and other men, except in his high destination, his superior endowments, and his splendid achievements. Some professed Christians are of the same opinion, and maintain, that he who was born in the fulness of time, was in every respect a man like ourselves. It is certain, however, that the expectations of the ancient people of God pointed to a nobler object, in consequence of the declarations of the prophets, that the Redeemer of Israel should be one who might "be called JEHOVAH our righteousness," and "Immanuel," which signifies "God with us." Our own Scriptures are still more explicit, and, in language which does not admit of a figurative interpretation, inform us, that it was the Word who "was God," and "by whom all things were created," that was "made flesh

\* John vi. 69.



and dwelt among us;" that it was the Son of God who was made of a woman; and that he who came of the Jews, according to the flesh, was "God over all, blessed for ever." These, and many other passages, import that in him the divine and the human nature were united; so that of the same person it may be affirmed with truth, that he is the fellow or the equal of the Lord of hosts, and the kinsman and brother of the children of the dust.

This article of our religion has been opposed with great violence in every age, and by heretics of various descriptions. It is the rock on which the Church is built, and the powers of darkness have exerted their utmost efforts to overthrow it. It is not necessary to review those opinions, which aimed at subverting the foundations of our faith by denying the divinity of Christ, whether he was affirmed by the Ebionites, and others, to be a mere man, *ἄνθρωπος ἀνθρώπου*, or at a later period by the Arians, to be a secondary deity; because we have formerly proved that he is God, equal to the Father. Our present design only requires that we should take notice of the errors which immediately related to the constitution of his person as *θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπου*, God and man.

Let us begin with the consideration of the nature which he assumed. And here we are met by two opinions which were vented in the primitive times, in opposition to the common faith of Christians, founded on the authority of Scripture. The first is that of the Docetæ, who were so called on account of their distinguishing tenet, that our Saviour was not a man in reality, but in appearance only. It was held by different individuals and sects; but, as they concurred in this opinion with respect to the Christ, they received in ancient times this common designation. According to them, what was supposed to be the man Christ Jesus, was a mere phantom, and his crucifixion was a scenical representation, by which the senses of the spectators were imposed upon. It surely is not necessary to attempt an elaborate refutation of a heresy so manifestly contrary to the most explicit declarations of Scripture. "Forasmuch," says an apostle, "as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same."\* There is no reason why we should listen for a moment to men who give the lie direct to an inspired writer, and would persuade us that, for the space of more than thirty years, God, for no conceivable end, deceived the Jewish nation by a series of miracles, (for it was only by miracle that they could be made for so long a time to think that a shadow was a solid substance;) and that our hope of salvation by the death of our Redeemer is vain, as he did not shed his blood for us, and, in truth, had no blood to shed. The second opinion, destructive of the human nature of Christ, is said to have been maintained by Arius and Eunomius, who affirmed that he had a body, but not a soul, and that the Logos, or his superior nature, supplied its place. Apollinaris, or Apollinarius, also taught that the Son of God assumed manhood without a soul, *ψυχὴν ἀνέω*, as Socrates relates; but afterwards, changing his mind, he said that he assumed a soul, but that it did not possess the intelligent or rational principle, *νοῦν δὲ οὐκ ἔχειν αὐτὴν*; and that the *λογος* was instead of that principle, *ἀντὶ νοῦ*.† Human nature he conceived to consist of three parts, a body, a soul, and a mind, of which the latter was wanting in our Saviour. The contrariety of both opinions to Scripture is apparent, and particularly of the former, which affirms that he had no soul. Besides that it is expressly mentioned by himself, when he said in his agony, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,"‡ and when, on the cross, he committed it to his Father, there is the same evidence that he possessed this essential part of our nature, as there is that it belongs to any other man; his thoughts, his reasonings, his feelings, his affections, his joys and sorrows, his hopes and fears, being all indications of the existence of that

\* Heb. ii. 14.

† Socrat. Hist. Eccles. lib. ii. c. 44.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 38.

living and intelligent principle, of the operation of which we are conscious in ourselves, and to which we give the name of the soul. It was impossible that the Divine nature was in him instead of a soul, because it is omniscient, and there were some things of which he declared himself to be ignorant; and because his sufferings, and fears, and sorrows, were incompatible with the perfect felicity of which it is immutably possessed. Can we conceive the Divine nature to have been in an agony, and to have exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"\*

We conclude, therefore, in opposition to those heresies, that our Redeemer assumed a complete human nature; or, as our Catechism expresses it, with its usual accuracy, that he took to himself "a true body and a reasonable soul." In the ancient creed, which goes under the name of Athanasius, he is said to have "not only been perfect God, but perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting."

While we maintain the integrity of his human nature, we admit that he assumed it with all its sinless infirmities. These may be comprehended in the word *flesh*, which is used by the evangelist John, in speaking of his incarnation; at least the word suggests this idea in other places where it occurs. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh."† "He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again."‡ In both passages the term seems to represent man as a being frail and mortal. Our Redeemer was not subject to any of the sinful infirmities of our nature, to sensual appetites and transports of passion; nor was there any stimulus or incentive to sin in the constitution or temperament of his body. The Scripture is careful, when it asserts his conformity to us in other things, to make this important exception. "He was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin."§ He was subject to none of those diseases which are the portion of man, who is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. Infirmities of this kind would have discommoded him in the discharge of his duty, and he was exempted from them on account of his personal purity. But he was subject to hunger and thirst, to cold and heat, and weariness, to pain of body arising from external injuries, and to distress of mind from the experience or apprehension of evil, and from the effects produced upon his feelings by the scenes with which he was surrounded. Although living in our world, he might have been defended against every annoyance by the order of Omnipotence, as an angel of heaven would be, were he to descend to the earth, and sojourn in it for a season; but such a state would not have accorded with the design of his mission. He submitted to our infirmities, that he might acquire an experimental knowledge of our sufferings, corporeal and mental, and we might be more fully assured of his sympathy; besides that it was only by his tears, and agony, and death, that the great work of our redemption could be accomplished. "We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted like as we are."||

Before we proceed farther, the question occurs, What was the reason that the Son of God assumed the nature of man? Some of the Schoolmen were so bold as to affirm, that he would have assumed it although man had not sinned. I do not know what arguments they advanced in support of this opinion, nor is it necessary to inquire, because, without hearing them, we may confidently pronounce that they are unsatisfactory and false. Their philosophy, such as it was, could give them no assistance in a matter of pure revelation; and every thing which the Scriptures say upon the subject, directly tends to the opposite conclusion. He became man for the redemption of men, the as-

\* Matt. xxvii. 46. † Gen. vi. 3. ‡ Ps. lxxviii. 39. § Heb. iv. 15. || Idem.



sumption of our nature being necessary to prepare him for those services and sufferings by which alone we could be redeemed. "Verily," says Paul, "he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham."\* The word which we translate, *took on him*, or *assumed*, signifies *to take hold of, to assist, or to help*, and was so understood by the Greek commentators, the most competent judges. The true sense of the passage, I apprehend, is, that the Son of God interposed for the deliverance, not of angels, but of men; and the nature of his interposition is stated in the preceding verses. "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;"† that is, he helped man by becoming a man. It is related by Cæsar, that it was an opinion of the Gauls, "that unless the life of man was given for the life of man, the immortal gods could not be appeased."‡ It would be absurd to quote their sentiments in support of a doctrine of revelation, especially as they founded upon them the cruel and detestable practice of human sacrifices; but it is worthy of attention that they had adopted an idea which in general was true, and was the reason of the great mystery which we are at present considering, the incarnation of our Saviour. If an atonement was necessary, we cannot conceive it to have been made by the sufferings of any other nature than that which had incurred the penalty of sin. No such relation could have been established between two beings of totally different natures, between a man and an angel, that, in consequence of it, what was done by the latter, should have been accepted, as if it had been done by the former. We can understand how the services of an individual may be admitted as an equivalent for the services of the whole class to which he belongs; but there is no principle on which we could account for the same mode of estimating the services of an individual of a different class. If an angel had suffered, there would have been no display of the righteousness of God; as, in that case, the nature which had sinned would have escaped with impunity. It behoved the surety, in this case, to be closely allied to the debtors, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, that he might be identified with them in legal reckoning.

To this argument for the incarnation of our Saviour it may be objected, that God might have saved us without satisfaction to his justice, and consequently, that there was no absolute necessity for the manifestation of his Son in the flesh. He might have freely pardoned our sins, bestowed blessings upon us unbought and unsolicited, and admitted us to communion without a mediator. Some have hazarded this opinion, which is as little distinguished by modesty as by reverence for Scripture. It imports that the mission of Jesus Christ was gratuitous in every sense; that without any sufficient reason he was subjected to sorrow and death; that there has been a theatrical display of the severity of divine justice, to persuade us that it is inflexible and inexorable, while it would not have been dishonoured, although sin had been permitted to pass with impunity; and that the love of God is not so wonderful as we were wont to believe, because its greatest gift might have been withheld without at all hindering our salvation. Such consequences will justify us in rejecting this opinion, especially when we consider that it does not find the shadow of support in the Scriptures, and rests on no more solid basis than the speculations of presumptuous men.

The necessity of the incarnation farther appears from the nature of the sufferings which our Redeemer had to endure. They were sufferings which would atone for the guilt of the people of God from the beginning to the end of the world. These were not easy to be borne. Human nature, unsupported by superior power, would have sunk under them. They would have crushed

\* Heb. ii. 16.

† Ib. 14.

‡ De Bell. Gall. lib. vi.

the mightiest of our race; they would have overwhelmed the highest angel in irretrievable misery. As it was necessary, therefore, that the penalty of the law should be inflicted on the nature which had sinned, so it was necessary that that nature should be so sustained in the dreadful enterprise, as, although bruised and broken, not to be utterly destroyed. The Son of God united it to himself; he was present with it more intimately than he is with the angels of heaven; he upheld it by the power of his divinity; and hence, although the man Christ Jesus was in such an agony, that his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground, he bore all his woes with invincible fortitude, and closed the scene with the words of triumph on his expiring lips: "It is finished."

The assumption of our nature by the Son of God is expressed in the Scriptures, by his "partaking of our flesh and blood," by his "being made flesh," and by his "being manifested in the flesh." The Greek writers call it *αὐθροτήσις*, *ἐκθροτήσις*, *ἐνσώματισις*, and *ἐσαρκωσις*; of which last term, the ecclesiastical Latin word *incarnatio*, which we have adopted into our language, is a literal translation. The act by which the union was formed, we cannot explain; but it constituted such a relation between him and our nature, that it is now as really his nature as is the divine. He is as truly man as he is God. This peculiar relation was indispensably necessary to the unity of the Mediator. Had the two natures, however intimately connected, not been personally united, their actions would not have been referrible to one agent; there would have been two agents, perfectly distinct, whereas now the person of Christ, if I may so express myself, is one principle of operation in the accomplishment of our redemption.

To illustrate this point more fully, I remark that it was not a human person which our Saviour assumed, but a human nature. The distinction between these is important, and should be carefully considered. By a person, we understand an intelligent being subsisting by himself, and not dependent upon any other. This is the meaning of the word when it is used in reference to men; when applied to the Trinity, it expresses a distinction which we cannot explain. To say that the Son of God assumed a human person, would be an express contradiction, because there is an idea imported in the word assumed, with which the personality of his human nature is absolutely inconsistent; for it imports that he made it his own; and besides, on this supposition, as we have already remarked, the acts of the man would not have been the acts of the Son of God, and consequently would not have been available for our salvation. He assumed a human nature, or, in other words, made it his own nature, by giving it a subsistence in his divine person. The term *personality* merely imports, that the nature of which we are speaking, subsists by itself. To deny, therefore, the personality of the human nature of Christ, takes nothing from it that is essential; it simply represents it as standing in a peculiar relation to another nature. It would have been a person, if it had not been united to the Son of God; but, being united to him, it cannot be called a person, because it does not subsist by itself, as other men do; each of whom has an independent existence. "The Son of God," says our church, "became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man, in one person for ever." And the Athanasian creed affirms, that, "although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ."

When, in speaking upon this subject, we use the phrase, the constitution of the person of Christ, it is necessary to guard against a misapprehension of the meaning. It is not that his person is made up of two constituent parts, the divine and the human nature; for this would imply that the Son of God was not a person before the union, or that he became a different person after it. The union of the soul and the body is the object in nature which most resem-



bles it, particularly in this respect, that as these compose one individual, what is said of either of them may be predicted of that individual; and, in like manner, what is affirmed of either of the natures of Christ, may be affirmed of Christ himself. But the resemblance is not exact; for neither the soul nor the body is a person by itself, but the divine nature of our Saviour had a personal subsistence prior to its union to the human. His person is not a compound person; the personality belongs to his Godhead, and the human nature subsists in it by a peculiar dispensation. The assumption of our nature caused no change in his person; it added nothing to it; and the only difference is, that the same person, who was always possessed of divinity, has now taken humanity.

It was the second person of the Trinity who alone was incarnate, as is evident from the Scriptures. It was the "Word" who "was made flesh," the "Son" who was "sent forth in the fulness of time, made of a woman." The incarnation was a personal act, and was therefore limited to the person whose act it was. We say, indeed, that the divine nature was incarnate; but we speak of it not *immediately*, to adopt the language of scholastic Theology, and as it is considered absolutely and in itself, but *mediately* in the person of the Son, or as far as it is determined and characterised in the person of the Son. The incarnation was not an act of the divine nature, but of a person in that nature, and therefore terminated upon that person alone. The whole divine nature may be said to have been incarnate; but this is true only because the whole divine nature is in the second person of the Godhead. In this way we may explain our meaning; but I am not sure that any distinct idea will be conveyed into the mind of the hearer. If the divine nature is in all the persons of the Trinity, we cannot understand how the incarnation was the act of one, and not of all; and the reason is, that we do not understand in what their personal distinction consists: yet we are certain that there is such a distinction, in consequence of which some acts are ascribed to one person, and others to another; and, in particular, that it was the Son who assumed our nature, and not the Father, or the Holy Ghost, although both concurred in this act; the Father by his appointment and approbation, and the Holy Ghost by his immediate agency in the miraculous conception.

This doctrine concerning the person of Christ was opposed by two heresies, which were broached in the fifth century, and after much disputation and confusion, terminated in the separation of their respective adherents from the communion of the catholic church. The first was the heresy of Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, who is said to have taught that there are two persons in Christ, a divine and a human. It originated in the conduct of one of his presbyters named Anastasius, who publicly condemned the title of *θετοκος*, or Mother of God, which was frequently given to the Virgin Mary, because, as he said, she was a woman, and of a woman God could not be born. He was supported by Nestorius, who zealously taught the same doctrine, and maintained that she should be called only *χριστοτοκος*, or the Mother of Christ. A great clamour was immediately raised; suspicions were entertained, that he denied the divinity of Christ; his enemies eagerly laid hold of the opportunity to humble and overwhelm him; and the affair having been brought before a council assembled at Ephesus, A. D. 431, his heresy was condemned, and it was declared, "that Christ was one divine person, in whom two natures were most closely united, but without being mixed or confounded together." Not a few of the moderns are of opinion, that his sentiments were misunderstood and misrepresented during the violence of the controversy. Men do not always admit all the consequences which others draw from their opinions, nor even all which may be legitimately deduced. It is acknowledged by some ancient writers, and particularly by the historian Socrates, that he was

sound in his views of the Trinity, and consequently of the divinity of Christ.\* He himself denied the charges which were fixed upon him by his enemies, and in one of his epistles virtually maintains the doctrine of his opponents, when he says, that Christ is a name significant of an impassible and a passible essence in one person, and that he acknowledged in him *ἐν προσώπῳ*. Hence it is not improbable that he and his opponents agreed in sentiment, and differed only in words. The controversy, however, gave rise to a sect called by his name, which held this unscriptural doctrine, "that there were two persons in our Saviour, the one divine and the other human; that a union was formed between the Son of God, and the Son of man, in the moment of the virgin's conception, and will never be dissolved; that it was not, however, a union of nature or of person, but only of will and affection; that Christ was therefore to be carefully distinguished from God, who dwelt in him as in his temple; and that Mary was to be called the mother of Christ, and not the mother of God."

It is not necessary to engage in a formal confutation of this heresy, which expressly contradicts the passages formerly quoted, and others which affirm that the "Word was made flesh;" that he who was "in the form of God took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man;" that the Son of God was "made of a woman;" and that her child was "God with us;" all which assert, as clearly as words can do, the unity of his person. Were the doctrine of the Nestorians true, the hope of the church founded on the divinity of the Saviour would be vain; for he who died upon the cross was a man, more highly exalted indeed than other men, but still a creature only, whose blood could not have atoned for the sins of the world.

The author of the other heresy was Eutyches, the abbot of a monastery in Constantinople, who expressed himself thus; "I acknowledge two natures in Christ before the union, but after the union I acknowledge only one nature." He did not specify the time when the union took place; but some of his followers said, that it took place at the conception, some at the resurrection, and some at the ascension. His opinion seems to have been, that his human nature was absorbed by the Divine, and that the divine nature alone remained. It underwent modifications by those who succeeded him, some of whom chose to say, "that in the Son of God there was one nature, which, notwithstanding its unity, was double and compounded;" while others, who assumed the name of Monophysites, laid down this proposition, "that the divine and human nature of Christ were so united as to form only one nature, yet without any change, confusion, or mixture of the two natures." The heresy of Eutyches was condemned by the council of Chalcedon, A. D. 451, which promulgated the following decree, as expressive of the faith which all Christians should hold, "that in Christ two distinct natures were united in one person, without any change, mixture, or confusion."

The distinction of the two natures in Christ was manifest while he lived upon earth. As God, he knew all things, but as man, there were some things which he did not know; as God, he was blessed for ever; but as man, he was acquainted with grief; as God, he was the living One; but as man, he died upon the cross. That the distinction is continued in the heavenly state is certain from this fact, that "he will so come in like manner as he was seen to go into heaven;"† that is, will return in the human nature, and that he is the ordained man, by whom God will judge the world in righteousness. The absorption of the human nature by the divine, or the mixture of the two natures, is perfectly unintelligible.

The ancient church maintained that the two natures of our Saviour were

\* Socrat. Hist. Eccles. Lib. vii. c. 32.

† Acts. i. 11.



united, *ἀδιαίρετος* and *ἀχωρίστος* *indivisibly and inseparably*, against the Nestorians, and *ἀτρέπτος* and *ἀσυγχύτος* *without change and confusion*, against the Eutychians. In opposition to both, it is declared in the Athanasian creed, that “though our Saviour be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ, one, not by conversion of the godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God, one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person; for, as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.” Our own church teaches, “that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.”\*

Let us now attend to the effects of the constitution of his person. The first effect which demands our attention, has been already noticed, namely, that by the union of our nature to his divine person, it was qualified to accomplish our salvation. It was not like our nature in Adam, which, although perfectly innocent, and endowed with all holy dispositions, was fallible, and might be overcome by temptation; but it was supported by the divine, and could not fail or be discouraged. While it was thus enabled to endure the arduous trial, a value accrued to its acts, which would not have belonged to them, although they had been performed by the highest creature in the universe; for they were the acts, not of the man alone, but of the Son of God, who was united to the man. When God says, “I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people,”† he refers to the constitution of the Messiah’s person; and the might which is ascribed to him, was not inherent in his human nature, but in the divinity. This is evident, even to the adversaries of his Godhead, who, aware that upon their hypothesis he could not have performed the work which we assign to him, deny that he did perform it, or that he offered an atonement for sin; and even proceed so far as to affirm, that he was subject, not only to the sinless, but to the sinful infirmities of our nature. Indeed, a human Saviour might have taught us our duty, and communicated such revelations as God had empowered him to make; but he could not have averted the wrath of God from us, nor have restored us to his favour. Such a Saviour could not have been proposed as the object of religious confidence. “Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.—Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.”‡ The object of the faith of the ancient Church was the same divine Redeemer who is exhibited to us as “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person, who by himself purged our sins.”§ “Surely, shall one say, in JEHOVAH have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In JEHOVAH shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.”||

The second effect of the constitution of his person is what the Greeks called *κοινωνία ιδιοματιών*, and frequently *αντίθεσις ιδιοματιών*. In our language, it is the communication of properties, by which Theologians mean, that, in consequence of the union of the two natures, the properties of both are ascribed to his person; or the properties of one nature are ascribed to his person, when it is denominated from the other. It will make the matter more distinct to say, that the properties of one nature are predicated of the other, because both belong to his person. One of the Fathers gives the following example: “We may say concerning Christ, He who is our God, was seen by

\* Westm. Conf. c. viii. §. 2.

† Ps. lxxxix. 19.

‡ Jer. xvii. 5, 7.

§ Heb. i. 3.

|| Is. xlv. 24, 25.

men, and conversed with them; and, This man was uncreated, impassible, and incomprehensible." The Scripture furnishes a variety of examples. The properties of the divine nature are ascribed to the human, or to him in the human, when Peter said to him, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;"\* and Thomas, "My Lord and my God."† Human properties are ascribed to the divine nature, or to him as possessing the divine, when it was said that "the Lord of glory was crucified,"‡ and that God purchased the Church with his own blood;§ for, after all that Griesbach has alleged against it, the word *God*, in this last verse, is probably the true reading, and, as such, is retained by some eminent writers. The reason that, in both cases, the properties of one nature are attributed to another, is the identity of the person to whom they equally belong, and who may be described by the one or the other, as occasion requires.

This is the sense in which we speak of the communication of properties, as an effect of the hypostatical union. We do not mean, that the properties of one nature were really communicated to the other; but that, all being the properties of one person, they are predicated of him, as denominated sometimes by the one nature, and sometimes by the other. The subject, however, is not always so understood. The Lutherans maintain a real communication of properties from the one nature to the other, or, at least, from the divine to the human. This opinion they have been led to adopt, with a view to support their peculiar ideas of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Renouncing transubstantiation, or the conversion of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, as held by the Church of Rome, they have embraced a dogma equally unintelligible, but more harmless in its consequences, namely, consubstantiation; which imports, according to the meaning of the term, that, although the elements are not changed into the substance of Christ, he is literally present in, with, and under them. Against this notion, it was an obvious objection, that such presence was impossible, as his human nature is in heaven. In attempting to evade this difficulty, they have furnished an illustration of the remark, that, if a man has told a lie, he must tell another to cover it, lest it should rain through; and they fairly admonish us to be cautious in adopting opinions, lest, finding ourselves involved in one absurdity, we be led into another, and then into a third, and all for the purpose of defending the first. Consubstantiation cannot be true, unless the human nature of our Saviour be present in all places; but we know that a man cannot be in two places at the same time; that he is a local being, necessarily confined to a particular spot, which he must leave, when he wishes to be in another. The Lutherans remove this impossibility by supposing another, namely, that the human nature of Christ is endowed, in consequence of the personal union, with the property of ubiquity, or that his divine nature has communicated to it the attribute of omnipresence. It is the first step, as we say, in some cases, which is difficult; the rest are easy. We are not, therefore, surprised that, having bestowed one divine perfection upon the human nature of our Saviour, they should make a donation of others, and affirm, as some of them do, that it is also possessed of omniscience and omnipotence. I am not aware that it is necessary to discuss this strange and irrational doctrine. There are some opinions which confute themselves simply by being stated, and this, I apprehend, is one of them. It confounds the divine and human nature of Christ, by assigning the same properties to both. It deifies the man Christ Jesus, and, consequently, makes him cease to be man; it, in fact, represents him to be as truly God as the Second Person of the Trinity. The Scripture points out, most clearly, the distinction between his natures; and if in any

\* John xxi. 17.

† Ib. xx. 28.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 8.

§ Acts xx. 28.



case it seems, upon a superficial view, to confound them, the passages will be easily understood, by the principle of the communication of properties, in the sense already explained. The truth is, that it was neither the sense nor the sound of Scripture which led the Lutherans to adopt their opinion; it was, if I may speak so, a second thought, and was forced out of the Scripture, by perverting and torturing it, to support their foolish hypothesis respecting the sacrament. Were they asked, What they mean by the ubiquity of the human nature of Christ? I am persuaded that every intelligent person among them, speaking without prejudice, would acknowledge that he could not tell. A body can be present every where, only by being infinitely or indefinitely extended. Do they imagine that the body of our Saviour is commensurate with the universe, or even with this world? If they say so, do they affix any idea to their words; or can any person affix an idea to them?

The last effect of the hypostatical union, which I shall mention, is the honour which results from it to the human nature of our Saviour. This consists, primarily and chiefly, in the relation which it bears to the divine nature. God is said to dwell in the saints, but not as he dwells in the man Christ Jesus. The union, in this case, is of a peculiar kind; no other man ever was, or ever will be, so united to the Godhead. He who is God, has made our nature his own. This is the highest honour which could be conferred upon a creature, and would be incredible, were we not assured of it by the Word himself, who was made flesh. By the assumption of our nature, it was exalted above all created beings. Angels were originally greater than man; but man is now elevated above them; that is, his nature has obtained a rank, which leaves the loftiest of the heavenly host at an immeasurable distance. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands."\* A man now sits upon the throne of the universe, and exercises dominion over all things in heaven, in earth, and in hell; a man is appointed to be the Judge of the world. It is evident, however, that he could not have been invested with this authority, if he had not been also God; for the government and final judgment of the universe manifestly require divine perfections, the knowledge of all things, unerring wisdom, and almighty power.

It has been inquired, Whether the human nature of Christ is the object of religious worship? but I apprehend this question is not attended with much difficulty. We do, indeed, find the Church in heaven and on earth, and the angels who surround the throne, worshipping the Lamb that was slain, and ascribing to him blessing, and honour, and glory and power; but we know that there is just ground for this homage in the divine nature which he possessed with the Father before the world began. The formal reason of religious worship is the infinite excellence of him to whom it is addressed. It is the want of this excellence which renders the worship of saints and angels idolatry. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only thou shalt serve."† It follows, therefore, that the human nature of Christ, although glorified above all conception, cannot be the formal object of worship, because it is a creature. The personal union did not deify it, but merely gave it a subsistence in the Second Person of the Trinity. We worship him who is God and man, but we worship him because he is God. We pray to him, because, as God, he hears and can help us; we wait on him, and obey him, because he is possessed of divine power and authority. This is the proper reason of those acts of worship which we perform to the Son; but the consideration that he still wears our nature, in which he died upon the cross, and ascended to heaven, is a powerful motive to serve him, and our great encouragement to

\* Heb. ii. 7.

† Matt. iv. 10.

hope for acceptance. While we look up to him as one who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and has a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, the awe with which the contemplation of his uncreated greatness would have inspired us, is abated, and we are emboldened to commit ourselves to his care, and confidently to expect his gracious aid in every time of need.

There is another question connected with the person of Christ, namely, Whether he is the object of worship as mediator? Divines commonly answer this question in the negative; because, in this character, he is inferior to the Father, and because he is the medium through which our prayers are offered up, and our services are accepted. His inferiority is, perhaps, not a sufficient reason for excluding the Mediator from divine honours, because it is merely economical, and is consistent with his equality in all other respects. In thinking of his official character, we must not lose sight of his essential dignity. It is acknowledged, however, that the ordinary method of Christian worship is, to address the Father by the Son; to pray to the Father for blessings, and to plead the merit of the Son as the argument for obtaining them. "Through him, we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father."\* We come to the Father through the mediation of the Son, and by the assistance of the Spirit. We do not usually pray to the Son, but to the Father in his name; yet prayers may be addressed to the Son, because he also is God, and ought, by the express command of the Father, to receive the same honour from men with himself; and although, to speak accurately, we pray in the name of the Mediator, and not to him, yet I am not sure that exact attention to this distinction is absolutely necessary in practice, or that it is always observed by the people of God. There is no doubt that they often address him as their Saviour and Intercessor, and there are passages of Scripture which seem to set them an example. Did not John think of him as mediator when he uttered this doxology, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever?"† And is he not viewed in the same character by the Church, when it says, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing?"‡ In a word, when we pronounce these words, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all; Amen:"§ do we not address him as a distinct person from the Father, and a distinct agent in the work of our salvation, and, consequently, as the mediator, to whom is committed the dispensation of the grace of the new covenant?

It is surprising that there should have been any dispute on this subject, while certain principles are granted by all parties, which are fully sufficient to terminate the controversy. It is acknowledged that we ought to love the Mediator with religious affection, that we should confide in him, and commit our souls to his care, and that we should bow to his authority, and yield implicit obedience to his law. How, then, can there be any hesitation about the propriety of addressing our prayers to him? Are not faith and love the essence of religious worship? and is there any thing more sacred and solemn in prayer, than in the dedication of our souls and bodies to our Redeemer, that they may be protected by his power and saved by his grace? He to whom this homage may be justly paid, is entitled to every other honour; and our ingenuity in making nice distinctions is very unwarrantably employed, if it lead us to defraud him of any of his claims. Certainly we shall not err, if, laying aside unprofitable speculations, we humbly and devoutly obey the command which was long ago given to the Church respecting the Messiah, "He is thy Lord: worship thou him."||

\* Eph. ii. 18. † Rev. i. 5, 6. ‡ Rev. v. 12. § 2 Cor. xiii. 14. || Psalm xlv. 11.



## LECTURE LIV.

## ON THE PROPHETICAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

The particular offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, included in that of Mediator—Christ's investiture with them—Their respective provinces, and mutual relations—The prophetic office of Christ—Different periods and modes of administering it—View of Christ's instructions as a Prophet.

THE general office with which our Redeemer was invested, is that of mediator between God and man. The nature of that office has been explained, and his qualifications for it have been pointed out. There are some particular offices comprehended in it, which I shall consider in their order.

Before we enter upon them, it will be necessary to attend to the manner in which he was invested with them, and fitted for the performance of their respective duties. We have seen that the fundamental qualification for his mediatorial office, was the assumption of our nature into personal union with the divine; but this important fact does not include all that the Scriptures say upon the subject. Something farther was done to the assumed nature, to prepare it for the high and arduous part which it was appointed to act.

Our Saviour is called in the Old Testament the Messiah, and in the New Testament the Christ; and both words import that he was the Anointed One. This designation is given to him, in allusion to the rite by which persons were consecrated to their offices under the former dispensation, namely, by being anointed with oil. This rite was observed in the case of the three offices which were most celebrated, those of prophet, priest, and king. With regard to the prophets, we have, I believe, the solitary instance of Elisha; but it is enough to establish the fact that it was occasionally, if not uniformly, used in setting them apart. The anointing of Aaron and his sons is expressly mentioned in the thirtieth chapter of Exodus; and particular directions are given with regard to the composition of the oil. Of the anointing of kings, we have examples in David and Solomon. In allusion to this rite, our Redeemer was called the Messiah or the Christ, to signify, not that he was consecrated by the same rite, but that he was solemnly appointed to his office by his Father, and furnished with all the requisite qualifications. The Father says concerning him, as is evident from the context, "I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him."\* Material oil could confer no power, and impart no qualifications, and was merely a sign, of which the meaning was understood. In the present case, the sign was not used, but the thing signified was communicated in perfection. "He was anointed," says the Scripture, "with the Holy Ghost."†

There are two periods at which this anointing took place. The first was his conception, when he was sanctified by the Holy Ghost, endowed with all the graces which can adorn human nature, and with those faculties which, being afterwards developed, excited admiration even in his youth; for at the age of twelve he astonished the doctors of Jerusalem by his wisdom, both in asking and answering questions. The second was his baptism, when "the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him."‡ The Spirit coming down from the opened heavens in a visible form rested upon him, to signify, in conjunction with the

\* Psalm lxxxix. 20.

† Acts x. 38.

‡ Matt. iii. 16.

voice which proceeded from the excellent glory, to all who were present, that God recognized him as his Son, and bestowed upon him an abundant measure of heavenly influences. In this manner he was publicly installed in his office, and fitted for the discharge of its duties. And thus the prophecy was fulfilled, "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord: and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."\*

This anointing relates to the human nature of our Saviour. I should have deemed this remark unnecessary, had I not found that even some professed theologians have entertained confused notions of the subject, and have hesitated to admit the plain proposition which has now been laid down. They seem to have been led into a mistake, by supposing that, because he was anointed as mediator, the unction extended to both his natures, forgetting that, in consequence of the hypostatical union, what is done to or by either of them, is done to or by his person. We say that the *θεανθρωπος*, the God-man, died for us upon the cross; but we mean that he died only as a man. In like manner we say, that our Mediator was anointed to his office; but we mean that he was anointed only in his human nature, unless we refer simply to his appointment to office, &c. And that we ought to mean nothing more, it requires very little reflection to perceive. The anointing is the communication of the Holy Ghost to qualify him for the duties of his office; but his divine nature stood in need of no new qualification, and could receive no accession of gifts and graces; whereas, his human nature possessed no excellence which had not been imparted to it, was capable of progressive improvement, and actually grew in wisdom as well as in stature, and in favour with God and with men.

The particular offices to which our Saviour was anointed, were the three which have been already mentioned as existing among the Jews, and which were conferred by the ceremony of pouring or sprinkling oil upon the persons set apart to them, the prophetic, the sacerdotal, and the regal. The first is ascribed to our Saviour in the following passage, which the use of it in the New Testament authorises us to apply to him, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken;"† the second in these words, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek;"‡ and the third, when God says to him, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."§ It is unnecessary to bring any quotations from the Christian Scriptures to prove, that all these offices belong to Jesus Christ. It has been remarked that, under the ancient economy, they were held by separate individuals, or at least that never more than two of them were united in the same person. There were kings and priests as Melchizedek; kings and prophets as David; and perhaps, too, prophets and priests in the case of some of the family of Aaron; but no person occurs who was invested with them all. This honour was reserved to our Redeemer, who alone could realize in himself what was prefigured by the various types. Moses, however, may be considered as an exception, who was at once the prophet of the Lord, the leader of the people, or "king in Jeshurun,"|| as he is termed; and a priest, or one who at least performed the duties of a priest prior to the inauguration of Aaron.

\* Is. xi. 2—5.    † Deut. xviii. 15.    ‡ Ps. cx. 4.    § Ps. ii. 6.    || Deut. xxxiii. 5.



But this, it is said, was an extraordinary case, admitted only for a time, and not intended to be an example. This instance, however, seems to abate the force of the remark, as does likewise that of Samuel, although I do not find that it has been noticed, who was at once the judge of Israel, a prophet, and a priest. As, however, neither he nor Moses was high-priest, and both ministered occasionally only at the altar, it may be true that no person but our Saviour permanently possessed all these offices.

It was necessary that he should be a prophet, a priest, and a king, because the duties of all those offices were requisite to the complete deliverance of his people from the circumstances in which they were placed. The moral condition of mankind shows, that not one of them could be dispensed with. They were involved in ignorance, guilt, and pollution. Their ignorance is removed by his prophetic office, their guilt by his priestly office, and their pollution by his kingly office. As a prophet, he dispels the darkness of ignorance; as a priest, he atones for our sins; as a king, he delivers us from the bondage of depravity. He reveals God to us as a prophet; he brings us near to God as a priest; he renews us after the image of God as a king. As a prophet he illuminates our minds by the spirit of truth; as a priest, he tranquillizes our hearts and consciences by the spirit of peace; as a king, he sanctifies the whole man by the spirit of holiness. The necessity of all his offices for the complete and final salvation of men, is pointed out in these words of Paul; "Of God he is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."\* As these offices relate to both God and man, God being the immediate object of the priestly, and man of the prophetic and kingly office, our Lord realizes the character of a mediator by performing their duties; for he establishes peace between heaven and earth, and binds them together in intimate and inviolable friendship.

In the relation of his offices to one another, the priestly office must be considered as the foundation of the other two. If Christ had not been a priest, he would not have been a prophet and a king; it being evident that, unless salvation had been obtained for us, it could not be revealed and applied. All his acts towards sinners for their deliverance from sin, and their restoration to the favour of God, pre-suppose an atonement by which Divine justice was satisfied. It was necessary that, as a priest, he should fulfil the condition of the new covenant, before he could administer it as a prophet and a king, for the communication of its blessings. But the order of the execution of his offices towards us is different. In the salvation of the soul, as in the creation of our world, he commences with the diffusion of light. The knowledge of ourselves and of the Saviour, is necessary to the production of faith, by which his righteousness is embraced as the only foundation of our acceptance with God. Conversion consists in "the opening of the blind eyes, and the turning of the soul from darkness to light;" and this is the work of his prophetic office. When our Prophet manifests himself to us by his word and spirit in his mediatorial character, we come to him as our priest, whose sacrifice has expiated our guilt, and submit to him as our king, whose service is perfect liberty, and whose power will defend us from every evil.

I omitted to mention, in the proper place, that the elder Socinians, who believed that Christ was a mere man, and at first was ignorant of the doctrine which he was appointed to publish to the world, maintained that, before he entered upon his ministry, he was taken up into heaven, and there received all necessary instructions. Thus the Racovian Catechism, which is a summary of their creed, in answer to the question, How Jesus Christ came to the knowledge of the Divine will? says, "He ascended into heaven, and there saw his Father, and that life and blessedness which he has announced to us, and heard from his Father all the things which he ought to teach; and being

afterwards let down from heaven to earth, he was anointed with an immense effusion of the Holy Spirit, by whose afflatus he delivered all the things which he had learned from the Father." The time when this is supposed to have happened, was soon after his baptism, and during his abode in the wilderness. It is enough to have stated this opinion, concerning which the Scripture preserves a profound silence, and which rests solely upon the confident and groundless assertion of those heretics. It was manifestly unnecessary that he should be taken up into heaven, because the will of God could have been as fully revealed to him upon earth. This fancy originated neither in Scripture nor in reason, but was a dishonest expedient resorted to for the purpose of supporting their favourite dogma concerning the simple humanity of our Saviour, by evading the argument for his pre-existence, founded on those passages of the New Testament which declare that he came down from heaven.

The word prophet, is commonly understood to mean a person who foretells future events; and in this sense it frequently occurs. But it also signifies a person who speaks by divine inspiration, whether the subject relate to the future, the past, or the present; a person who speaks in an eminent and extraordinary manner; and even a person who speaks in the name of another like himself. Indeed, the Greek word *προφητης*, and the Hebrew word *נביא*, are used with a considerable variety of meaning. By some of the Jews, the latter term is interpreted *an orator, or eloquent preacher*; and by others, *a man to whom God has revealed secret things*. In the following words of God to Moses concerning Aaron his brother, it simply denotes one who speaks in the name of another: "Thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth; and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of a God."\* This passage is to be taken in connexion with what is afterwards said: "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet."†

It is not with the usual limitation of the term that we call Jesus Christ a prophet. We use it in its utmost latitude, to denote that he is the great messenger of God, the revealer of his counsels and will, who has not only foretold future events, but made known to us Divine truths to be believed, promises to be embraced, ordinances to be observed, and laws to be obeyed.

When we contemplate Jesus Christ simply as a divine person, we must consider him as the uncreated source of all intelligence and wisdom: He is "the true Light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world."‡ In his mediatorial character, however, he speaks not properly in his own name, but in the name of him who gave him his commission, and brings to us his Father's message. Hence we say, that he was invested with the prophetic office; the term, office, implying that he acted a subordinate part, and by the authority of another. What has been now stated is conformable to his own declarations, of which the following are a specimen: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak."§ In the first verse of the Revelation of John, his intermediate agency in the communication of knowledge to the church is distinctly expressed: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John."||

Having made these preliminary observations, I proceed to treat directly of

\* Exod. iv. 15, 16. † Ib. vii. 1. ‡ John i. 9. § Ib. vii. 16, 17. xii. 49. ¶ Rev. i. 1.



his prophetic office. The exercise of it may be considered in three distinct periods. The first reaches from the fall to his incarnation; the second from that era, or from his baptism, to his death; and the third from his resurrection, and particularly from the day of Pentecost to the end of the world.

The first period extends from the fall to his birth; for, although he was not incarnate, he was the appointed Saviour of his people; and, as far as was consistent with his present state, he acted the part of a mediator. The assumption of our nature was not indispensably necessary to prepare him for giving instruction to mankind, although every gracious communication to the world pre-supposed that event as afterwards to take place, and was made in the view of it. There were frequent appearances of a divine person in the human form, who delivered commands and promises to the patriarchs; and it seems reasonable to conclude, that it was the same person who proposed actually to take our nature in a future age. It is highly probable, that it was he who promulgated from Sinai the system of laws which served as the foundation of religion for so many ages; and, indeed, by whom can we so naturally conceive sacrifices to have been instituted, and the knowledge of future events to have been communicated, as by him in whose person, and manifestation, and life, and death, and resurrection, and subsequent glory, the types and predictions were to be fulfilled? But there is no necessity to have recourse to conjectures and probabilities, when we are in possession of explicit and authentic information. The following words of Peter deserve particular attention: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time, the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."\* The remarkable expression in this passage is, the "Spirit of Christ," or of the Messiah; which evidently signifies not merely, as the Socinians affirm, that he predicted the Messiah, but that he was sent by him; and, consequently, teaches us that the prophets were his ministers, commissioned and qualified by him to give instructions suited to that age of the church. Hence it appears, that he executed his prophetic office prior to his coming in the flesh, and that the books of the Old Testament contain the Revelation of Christ, as well as those of the New. It is not an objection against this statement, that God is said to have spoken to the fathers by the prophets, and in these last days to have spoken to us by his Son;† words which seem to import that till the last days the ministry of the Son did not commence; because their design is merely to point out the difference in the external and visible agency under the two dispensations. Under the first, God made known his will by the medium of the prophets; under the second, by the medium of his Son in our nature. But the same person who, in the fulness of time, declared the will of God in person, revealed it before his incarnation by human messengers, as he continued to do after his ascension. The difference between the former and the present dispensation consisted chiefly in this, that the present commenced with the personal ministry of the Messiah; and hence the Gospel is called, the word "which began to be spoken by the Lord."‡

The second period extends from the birth of Christ, or more properly from his baptism, when he entered upon his public ministry, to his death. During this period, the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, declared him to men with his own lips. The privilege which his contemporaries enjoyed, who heard his discourses, so full of wisdom and grace, was invaluable, although few of them understood and improved it. "Blessed," he said to his disciples, "are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For

\* 1 Pet. i. 10, 11,

† Heb. i. 1, 2,

‡ Ib. ii. 3.

verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”\* Were I to attempt to give an account of the instructions which he delivered to his disciples and others, it would be necessary to transcribe, or at least to lay before you, a summary of the Gospels. In general, it may be observed, that, while he corrected the false notions of religion, and the perverse interpretations of the law of Moses, which prevailed among the Jews, he unfolded the character of God in all its perfection, called the attention of men to the cultivation of piety and holiness as alone acceptable to him, exhibited himself as the Messiah whom they expected, and gave intimations of the design of his mission, and the nature of the salvation which he had come to accomplish. At present I shall not speak more particularly of his doctrine, because it will come under review in the sequel of this lecture.

There is a question, however, which this is the proper place to consider, Whether Christ corrected and perfected the moral law, which was delivered to the Jews? It has been maintained, that the moral precepts of Christ were in some instances different from those of Moses, and that our Saviour has enlarged the law, by prescribing new duties, and has even prohibited certain actions which were formerly permitted. It is a favourite tenet of Socinians, that the moral system delivered to the Church before the coming of Christ, was imperfect, and needed correction or supplement, and they have been led to adopt it by their peculiar views with respect to the design of the mission of Christ. As they do not admit, with the Catholic church, that he came into the world to expiate our sins, it was necessary to find something for him to do, which should be worthy of the great expectations that were excited, and the mighty preparations that were introductory to his appearance. With this view they are anxious to prove, that the rule of morality which had been previously given to the Jews, laboured under many defects, that he might have the glory of having published to mankind a law clear and full, in which our whole duty to God and to man is explained. In the Racovian Catechism, which first appeared about the beginning of the seventeenth century, we find this question, “What are the perfect commandments of God, comprehended in the New Testament?” to which this answer is returned—“A part of them is contained in the precepts delivered by Moses, together with those which were added by Christ and his apostles; and a part is contained in those which were peculiarly prescribed by the same Christ and his apostles.”† By the latter, I apprehend they mean precepts entirely new, and by the former old precepts improved. They go on to show, under the several precepts of the decalogue, the supposed additions and improvements, in a manner by no means satisfactory, and sometimes exceedingly trifling and silly. On the contrary, those whom we call orthodox, affirm that the law was absolutely perfect from the beginning; that Christ came not to destroy it, or any part of it, but to fulfil it; and that all the duties enjoined by him, which have been supposed to be new, may be resolved into love to God, or love to man. The right answer to this question depends upon the manner in which it is stated. In the Socinian sense, I have no hesitation in saying, that it leads to a conclusion which ought not to be admitted. If it were asked, Whether Jesus Christ enjoined greater love to God and our neighbour than was enjoined by the law of Moses? no man who had considered the subject, could hesitate to give a negative answer. But if it were asked, Whether he has prescribed new modes of expressing our love to both? I cannot conceive that there could be any heresy in saying, that he may have done so. Divines have endeavoured to prove, that faith in

\* Matt. xiii. 16, 17.

† Catech. Eccl. Pol. Sect. vi. Cap. 1.



Christ, and repentance, are duties inculcated by the law which was given to Adam in innocence. This position requires explanation. Faith and repentance could not be duties incumbent upon man, while he retained his integrity, and consequently they can be referred to the moral law as originally given, only in the same sense in which all possible duties of all possible intelligent creatures might be referred to it, because it enjoins supreme love to God, from which universal obedience will flow. In strict language, they are new modifications of this principle, or new duties founded on new relations between man and his Creator. At the same time it should be observed that, whether we call them new or old, they were not prescribed for the first time by our Saviour, but were enjoined under the former dispensation. The arguments commonly advanced to prove that the moral law was corrected and improved by our Saviour, are of little or no force; either because the new duties which he is supposed to have enjoined, were binding before his coming, or because his design has been totally misapprehended, as if he was correcting the law itself, when he was only exposing and rejecting the corrupt glosses and traditionary maxims of the rabbies.

The third period extends from the accession of Christ, or rather from the day of Pentecost, when he poured out the Holy Ghost on his disciples, to the end of the world. But this period may be divided into two portions, according to the difference in the mode of administration. In the first he instructed the Church by extraordinary means. The apostles were inspired men, and delivered to the world the revelations which were made to them by the Spirit. And as it was the spirit of Christ who filled them with knowledge and wisdom, our Saviour continued to execute his prophetic office by their ministry, as much as when he declared the mysteries of the kingdom to his immediate followers with his own lips. This is also evident from his words to them on the evening before his death: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and show it unto you."\* There is no difference in respect of authority between the doctrines of his apostles, and those delivered by himself. They are equally his doctrines, and are entitled to be received with the same submission of mind, and the same undoubting confidence. Hence we perceive how groundless is the distinction which has been made between the gospels and the epistles, as if the former were a more certain rule of faith than the latter. As those who chiefly insist on this distinction, affirm that our Saviour was a mere man, peccable and fallible, there is no proper foundation for it in their system, because such a person could not be so much superior to the apostles, as to entitle his testimony to a decided preference to theirs, especially as theirs was confirmed by miracles as great and numerous as those which he performed. We have always reason to suspect those who depreciate one part of Scripture to enhance the value of another. This expedient has not been resorted to from a conviction of its truth, but to serve a particular purpose. Certain doctrines which its authors are unwilling to receive, are more fully and explicitly taught in the epistles; and the insinuations thrown out respecting their obscurity, the perplexedness of the reasoning, the abruptness of the style, and the inferiority of the writers, are designed to set aside their evidence in favour of those doctrines; as in a legal process, the imputations on the character of a

\* John xvi. 12—15.

witness, are intended to weaken the force of his testimony. The shift is as unavailing as it is dishonest, for it were easy to show that the contested doctrines, as the divinity and atonement of Christ, election and justification by grace, are plainly delivered in the gospels; and that the only respect in which the epistles differ from them is, that there they receive a more ample illustration, and the objections against them are considered and refuted. The epistles are the word of Christ, as much as the gospels, for the writers were assisted by his spirit in composing them. When conjoined with the Gospels, they fill up or complete what we call the Christian revelation, because it was communicated to the world by Christ himself, and his accredited messengers.

The second portion into which we have divided the last period of the ministry of Christ as a prophet, reaches from the close of revelation to the end of time. During this interval, he executes his office by ordinary means; that is, by the Scriptures, which it is his will that men should read and understand; by his ministers, who are appointed to explain and apply them; and by his Spirit, of whose agency, in the illumination of the mind, we shall afterwards speak. Jesus Christ, in his state of exaltation, continues to be the instructor of the ignorant, and of them that are out of the way; and his work will not cease, till all who are to be saved have been brought to the acknowledgment of the truth. Hence, he is represented as still speaking to us by his word, written and preached: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for, if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."\* The system of ordinances, and ministers, and laws, instituted for the conversion and salvation of men, has emanated from his authority, and will be maintained by his providence, till its design is accomplished, in the perfection of every member of the Church. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."† Whatever knowledge of God and his will, of the purposes of grace, and the realities of the world to come, is found among men, it has been derived from the instructions of Christ; and his word will continue to impart wisdom to his disciples, till they have entered into the world above, where their faculties will be fully expanded, and vision will succeed to faith. He is the sun of the spiritual world, whose rays, penetrating into our benighted souls, diffuse a divine light, and make them shine with reflected glory. In short, as there is but one sun in the heavens, from which light has flowed to irradiate every region of the earth, throughout the successive generations of mankind; so, our Redeemer is the one source of all the spiritual wisdom which has enlightened them from the beginning of the world, in whatever form it has been communicated; whether as a record of the past, or a prediction of the future; a disclosure of mysteries which reason could not discover, or an authoritative publication of the will of the Supreme. And hence originates the unity of revelation, the harmony that binds together the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, the identity, in respect of substance, of the religions of the antediluvians and the men of the present age; for, great as the difference seems to be upon a superficial view, it is reduced to this single point,

\* Heb. xii. 25.

† Eph. iv. 11—15.



that the germ contained in the first notices of it has now developed itself, and yields fruit in abundance.

If you now ask, what Jesus Christ, as a prophet, has taught us? I might, in answer to the question, refer you to the Scriptures. These contain his instructions under both dispensations, and are the only rule of faith and obedience. I shall not attempt to give you a summary of his doctrine, which would occupy too much time; and, besides, would be improper, as it would necessarily lead to a repetition of topics, which have been already considered, and an anticipation of others, which will afterwards be discussed. I shall confine myself to a few general remarks.

First, He has illustrated certain truths of which men already possessed some knowledge, such as the existence of God, his providence and moral government, and the law which he has given for the regulation of our conduct. Of these, some notions were found among nations which had not been favoured with revelation; but they were imperfect, and mingled with errors, as we have seen in a former part of this course. It was in consequence of his teaching by the prophets, that the Jews were so distinguished by their creed, that, in matters of religion, the wisest nations of antiquity, when compared with them, were as children and fools. No philosopher could ever venture to pronounce, with unhesitating confidence, the proposition which was in the mouth of every rustic in Canaan, that God is one. It is owing to his teaching by the Apostles, that the polytheism, the idolatry, the gross superstition, the licentious maxims and barbarous usages of Greece and Rome, and other nations less civilized, have been supplanted by the pure and simple creed, which is adopted in Christian countries, or, at least, in such of them as acknowledge the Scripture alone as their standard. Those truths, which were once dimly seen, now shine with the light of day. The knowledge of them is facilitated, and is within the reach of the most common capacity, because they are not to be sought out by laborious investigation, but to be received upon authority. The voice of Jesus Christ has decided all controversies, and terminated all doubts respecting them. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."\*

Secondly, He has established as certain, some points which were the subject of conjecture, or of fluctuating opinion. I refer particularly to the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments. On these topics much was talked and written, and, perhaps, they were not called in question by the common people, who did not reason about them, but gave credit to tradition. That the belief of the wisest among the heathens rested upon no solid foundation, is evident from this fact, that when they proceed to bring arguments, some of them are inconclusive and fanciful; and those which are of more weight, failed to produce conviction, as we see from the doubts expressed by the most eminent philosophers. If at one time they seem to have attained to certainty, at another they hesitated and wavered, and ended in leaving the matter to be determined by the event. "But Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." Coming from the invisible state, he has so far disclosed its secrets, as to assure us that the soul shall survive the death of the body, and will be consigned to bliss or woe by the sentence of its Judge. Although this truth may have little practical effect upon many of his followers; they never call it in question; and they alone doubt and disbelieve, who, having renounced him as their Teacher, commit themselves to the guidance of their erring reason, and the blinding influence of unholy passions. In the creed of his followers, it is a primary article, that the present is only the introductory stage of our existence;

\* John i. 18.

that at death we shall enter upon a new state of being ; and that, through him, they who believe, shall enjoy perpetual felicity in heaven.

Thirdly, He has made known truths of which men were completely ignorant. I refer to the scheme of redemption in all its parts, which, having its origin in the sovereign will of God, is a matter of pure revelation. Some notions were entertained by heathen nations of the placability of the divine nature, and sacrifices were offered to appease the anger of the gods, and to conciliate their favour. But they could assign no satisfactory reason for their opinion or their practice. Their fathers had believed and acted in this manner before them, and they followed them without being able to show that their hope had any solid foundation. The truth is, that it was not from reason that they derived their ideas of the mercy of the Supreme Being, and the efficacy of sacrifices, but from revelation, of which some fragments, encrusted with superstition, had been handed down to them by tradition. Those faint rays, which glimmered amidst the darkness of heathenism, proceeded from the Sun of righteousness, but had been deprived of their splendor and their influence, by the grossness of the medium through which they were transmitted. All our knowledge of the gracious purposes of God, whether more or less extensive ; whether consisting in hopes and conjectures, or in the full assurance of faith, must be traced to this source : " For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? or who hath been his counsellor ? " \* No one was present with him but his Son, when the plan was formed for the salvation of our guilty race. There is nothing in his external works to suggest the idea of it ; there is no impression of heavenly mysteries upon visible objects. Providence displays his beneficence and his patience ; but it gives no intimation of his purpose to bestow final felicity upon sinners, of an atonement to expiate their guilt, or of the communication of supernatural grace to purify their nature. " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his spirit ; for the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. " † It is the glory of Jesus Christ as a prophet, that he has not only shed new light upon subjects of which men possessed some previous knowledge, but has disclosed a scene, in grandeur and interest, surpassing the wonders of creation. It is chiefly on this account that there was a necessity for his prophetic office. It is chiefly on this account that he is the Light of the world. And, indeed, all the other knowledge which he has communicated to mankind would have been of no avail, if he had not revealed his Father to us as the God of love, and himself in the character of a Saviour. What we wanted to know, was not merely that there is one God, but that he is propitious to his fallen creatures ; not merely that we should worship him, but that our services shall be acceptable to him ; not merely that there is a state beyond the grave, but by what means we shall obtain possession of its blessedness. On these important subjects, he has given us full satisfaction. How welcome to us should be a teacher, who speaks the words of truth and grace, and in the execution of his office, has realized the following interesting description : ‡ " The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek : he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God ; to comfort all that mourn ; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness ; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might

\* Rom. xi. 34.

† 1 Cor. ii. 9—10.

‡ Is. lxi. 1—3.



be glorified." This is the jubilee of the human race, and the Messiah, in the character of our prophet, has announced it by the Gospel.

I shall resume the subject in the next Lecture.

## LECTURE LV.

### ON THE PROPHETICAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

View of Christ's instructions as a Prophet continued—Superiority of Christ to all other Teachers, in the completeness, perspicuity, authority, and efficacy of his instructions—Agency of the Holy Ghost in the execution of Christ's Prophetical office; its necessity and effects.

IN the preceding Lecture, I pointed out the qualifications of Jesus Christ for the prophetical office, the time during which it is executed, and the subjects of his instructions, of which only a very general account was attempted. You would observe, that the subjects to which I referred were all of a religious nature, and to these his instructions were confined.

Jesus Christ has said nothing concerning some topics to which the attention of men is earnestly directed, and which are intimately connected with their temporal interests; as science, politics, and the various arts by which life is sustained and adorned. Of these he took no notice; not because they are unimportant; for, in their own sphere, they are of great utility; but because they bore no relation to the purpose of his mission. In the business of the present life, reason and experience are sufficient guides. We needed no revelation to assist us in the study of nature, in the operations of husbandry and commerce, in the constitution of civil government, and the enactment of laws for the security of our persons and property. The degree of knowledge which is necessary for purposes of practical use, may be obtained on these subjects by the exercise of the faculties with which our Creator has endowed us. There was no reason, therefore, why Jesus should have interrupted his more important labours to descend to details about these inferior matters. He was something higher than a philosopher or statesman; he was a teacher of sublime mysteries, which it had not entered into the mind of man to conceive.

He has not given us so full and particular an account of a future state as some men may deem desirable, and they may, therefore, look upon the want of it as a defect. Curiosity is a very powerful principle, and every thing which promises to gratify it meets with eager attention. How welcome to some persons would be graphical descriptions of heaven, and such a detail of the state of the inhabitants and their employments, as we receive, of the places which they have visited, from travellers on their return from a foreign country! Enthusiasts indulge in such descriptions. Mistaking the visions of fancy for realities, they retail them as authentic, and sometimes obtain for their fables the credit which is due only to truth. You might imagine that one of them had been in the celestial paradise, and had lately descended to the earth with the impressions of its scenes of magnificence and felicity fresh in his memory; while, in fact, he is the dupe of his own sleeping or waking dreams. Mahomet has portrayed his paradise with the bright colours of oriental imagery; and while it rises to the view of his deluded followers, with its groves of perpetual verdure, and its cooling streams, and its hours, and all its other sensual delights, they feel their hearts glow with augmented zeal for his religion, and new fervour of desire. Our Prophet, who alone could have given a faithful

description of the invisible state, has abstained from it. He has contented himself with informing us, that there is a place of rest for his followers beyond the limits of this visible diurnal sphere, and with a general account of the exercises and enjoyments of those who are admitted into it. There is nothing to please the imagination; but there is enough to support faith, and animate hope, and minister consolation amidst the ills of life; and if these purposes are accomplished, his end is gained. If men will not be excited to a life of piety and holiness, by the simple knowledge that there is another world in which the followers of Christ shall receive a recompence of incalculable value and everlasting duration, they would have continued equally insensible, and as much attached to earthly vanities, although by the particularity of the description, the veil had been drawn aside, and it had stood disclosed, as it were, to the eye.

Having taken a general view of the instructions of Christ, I proceed to lay before you some characters or properties by which they are distinguished, and he is proved to be superior to all other teachers.

The first particular to which I request your attention, is their fulness or completeness; for, although there are some points, as we have shown, which he has passed over in silence, there is nothing wanting in his instructions as a system of religious truth. To be convinced of this fact, we must take into consideration the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as constituting a whole; for such they are, having been dictated by one Spirit, and intended to promote one design. When we call them two revelations, we express ourselves inaccurately if we mean that they are different in the subject of which they treat; for it is one religion, varying only in its external form, which is taught from the beginning to the end of the Bible. Were we to separate the Old and the New Testament, and to examine them as distinct and independent revelations, we might find defects in the former; but what is wanting in the one is supplied in the other, and both taken together constitute the word of Christ. In like manner, if we were to consider by itself the revelation made by our Saviour in person, it also might appear to us deficient, for he had many things to say to his disciples which they were not then able to bear, of which, however, they were afterwards informed when the Spirit came and led them into all the truth. I have no doubt that the New Testament alone is sufficient for salvation, as it contains the whole gospel, or all that can be known concerning the gracious purposes of God; but when I speak of the fulness of our Saviour's instructions, I refer also to the Old Testament, of which the histories and prophecies and devotional compositions are so useful and edifying to the church. What I affirm is, that he has made a perfect revelation of the will of God, using the term *perfect* in a relative sense, as importing that it is fully adapted to its design. As much light is let in upon the mind as is suited to its present capacity and circumstances. We may learn from the Scriptures all the truths which we ought to know, and all the duties which we are bound to perform; we may find the way to heaven, and receive all the directions and assistance which we need in pursuing our journey to it. While vain curiosity is checked, humble inquiries are encouraged, and the means of satisfying them are provided. Whosoever sits down at the feet of Christ and receives his law, shall be made wise unto salvation.

"I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things."\* These words have no authority in themselves, as they were spoken by an ignorant, heretical woman; but they prove the state of opinion among the Samaritans, and no doubt also of the Jews. There was a general expectation that the Messiah would solve all questions in religion,

\* John iv. 25.



and make a clearer and more perfect revelation than was then enjoyed. When Moses, by the order of God, had given laws and ordinances to his countrymen to regulate their worship and obedience, he added, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me."\* Whether we conceive Jesus Christ alone to be meant, or the words to have a double sense, and to refer, in the first instance to a succession of prophets, and ultimately to him, they manifestly implied, that new communications of the Divine will would be made. When the ministry of the prophets came to a close, the Jews received a commandment to adhere steadfastly to the law which was published from Sinai, but at the same time were directed to look for a dispensation of greater light. Hence the last of them closes his book with a prediction of the appearance of the Sun of Righteousness, and of his forerunner who would prepare the people for the day of the Lord. When the Baptist came, and the eyes of all men were turned to him, he told them of another, whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose, and who would excel him in doctrine, as well as in dignity of person. "He that cometh from above, is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth."† But there is no intimation of another divine messenger after Jesus Christ, to supply what may be wanting, or to illuminate what may be dark in his revelation. By the books of the New Testament the canon is completed. God, when he spoke to us by his Son, spoke for the last time. The spirit of inspiration is withdrawn from the church, and men must henceforth walk by the rule of the written word. This is a proof of the fulness of revelation. It is not because God is less attentive than in former times to the interests of mankind, that he no longer sends extraordinary messengers, but because the revelation which he has already given is sufficient. The Scriptures are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," and are able to make us "perfect, and thoroughly to furnish us unto all good works."‡

It is on the ground of the fulness or perfection of the instructions of Jesus Christ as prophet, that we are commanded to hear him alone, and to call no man master or teacher. If there were any defect in revelation, it would not be a crime to endeavour to supply it by the efforts of our own reason, or by having recourse to the superior wisdom of others. The undue stress which is sometimes laid upon human authority in religion, betrays the want of proper respect for the claims of our Saviour to the implicit and unreserved confidence of his professed disciples. The church of Rome, by admitting traditions as a part of the rule of faith, and placing them on a level with the dictates of inspiration, pronounces the Scriptures to be imperfect, and is as manifestly guilty of setting aside the prophetic office of Christ, as she is of setting aside his priestly office when she exalts the glorified saints to the rank of intercessors with God.

The second particular which is worthy of attention, is the perspicuity of his instructions. In ascribing this property to them, I wish it to be understood that I do not apply it to every part of them, but to the Scriptures considered as a whole. The revelation of Jesus Christ, taken as a whole, is perspicuous; that is, it communicates distinct and satisfactory information respecting all the subjects which it interests us to know. Some parts of it, when viewed by themselves, are obscure. This is the general character of the Old Testament, so far as it speaks of future things, whether they relate to Christ himself and his work, or to the events which were to befall his church to the end of the world. This obscurity may be said to have been intentional, it being the de-

\* Deut. xviii. 15.

† John iii. 31, 32.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

sign of God not to give more light than was adapted to the circumstances of mankind. You will perceive that his wisdom required that a clear and minute statement of future things should not be given, for various reasons, and particularly that there might be no interference with the free agency of men, who were to be instruments, and, in many cases, the unconscious instruments, of fulfilling his will. But these obscurities, and particularly those which relate to the Messiah, are cleared up in other parts of revelation; for what was formerly the subject of prediction, is now the subject of history. The incongruities which seemed to be in his character, while at one time he was described as a man of sorrows, and at another as a mighty conqueror; at one time as dying, and at another as enjoying immortal life, are explained in the gospels, and are seen to harmonize in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me."\* There are obscurities, too, which arise from the nature of the subject. We cannot understand the doctrine of the Trinity, of the union of two natures in Christ, and of the operations of the Holy Ghost upon the soul; we cannot give an answer to several questions which are proposed with respect to the divine decrees, the agency of Providence, and the origin of evil. But before we make our ignorance an objection against the perfection of revelation, we should be certain that it proceeds from the suppression of information which might have been communicated, and not from our want of capacity. Of this, however, we are not certain; or rather, we have reason to believe that some of those subjects are beyond the comprehension of any created intellect, and that none of them could have been rendered intelligible to us in the present state of our faculties. The obscurity, therefore, which attends them, is no reproach to our Teacher, who has adapted his lessons to the ability of his scholars. He could have given a full explanation of them, for to him they are not mysteries; but to whom should he have addressed it? Not, surely, to us, in whose minds his words would have excited no ideas, and who should have been in the same situation with the prophet Daniel, who said, when in answer to his question the man clothed in linen declared the time of the end of the wonders, "I heard, but I understood not."

It is worthy of attention, that although in such cases the interior of the doctrines is enveloped in darkness which no eye can penetrate, the doctrines themselves are clearly revealed. No person who reads the Scriptures with attention and candour can doubt that there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead; that our nature and the divine are united in our Saviour; that God has fore-ordained all things which come to pass; and that men and all their actions are subject to the controul of his providence. It is not necessary that we should be able to show how these things are, nor is it possible to conceive any moral purpose which such knowledge would promote; religion is concerned only with the facts; and these are stated in such a manner, that ingenuity is required, not to find, but to avoid finding them in the Scriptures. If it be true that the facts alone are of practical utility, and that a more intimate acquaintance with them would contribute nothing to their effect, our Lord has been sufficiently explicit; and, with respect even to these points, has fulfilled his duty as a prophet.

With regard to revelation, considered as a whole, and as intended to instruct us in religion, no man can reasonably complain of want of perspicuity. What is more plain, than that there is one God, possessed of every natural and moral perfection?—that he is the Creator, and Governor, and Judge of the hu-

\* Luke xxiv. 44.



man race?—that we are sinners, and his Son is our Saviour?—that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and now intercedes for us in heaven?—that we are justified through faith in his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit?—that we are bound to yield obedience to his law?—that he will raise the dead, pronounce sentence upon the righteous and the wicked, and receive his faithful followers into his everlasting kingdom? These, and similar topics, which constitute the essence of religion, are expressed in the plainest manner, and are level to the lowest capacity. The unlearned may understand them—and even children may attain such a measure of knowledge as shall awaken the feelings and exercises of piety. No man can be a scholar or philosopher without superior talents, and many years spent in reading, and observation, and reflection; but to a disciple of Christ, nothing more is required than attention, humility, and prayer.

A third character of the instructions of Christ, is the authority with which they are delivered. The manner is not that of an ordinary teacher, who feels it incumbent upon him to prove what he says, but of a legislator, who commands. The first chapter of the Bible (for you will remember that the whole Scripture is the revelation of Christ, as I showed in my last lecture) furnishes a specimen. An event is there recorded, of which there could be no human witness, and about which, therefore, the ingenuity of men has displayed itself in the invention of a variety of theories. The history of the creation is not submitted by Moses to the judgment of the learned, but propounded as unquestionably true; not a single argument is advanced in support of the narrative; coming from the Creator himself, who revealed it to his servant, it demands the assent of all to whom it is published. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” The same authoritative manner is apparent throughout the whole Scripture. It is seen in the ministry of the succeeding prophets. No hesitation is expressed, whether they foretell future events, or tender reproofs, or denounce threatenings, or inculcate duties. Their personal authority, indeed, was nothing, but they speak in the name of God; bearing his commission, they demand implicit obedience; and, if they ever condescend to reason, it is solely with a view to give greater force to their admonitions and intreaties. The Scriptures every where suggest the idea of a law, accompanied with many manifestations of grace, but speaking in the tone of command, and requiring submission as our duty.

The authoritative manner, however, is more fully displayed in the personal instructions of our Lord. There was necessarily some abatement in those of the prophets, who, being only his messengers, were under the necessity of appealing to their commission; but, in him, authority assumed its most dignified character. While they spake in the name of God, he spake in his own name. It is true, that he also was the messenger of the Lord of Hosts; but he was of a different rank from all who had preceded him. He was the Son, as well as the servant of JEHOVAH, and, therefore, entitled to address mankind in a style which would have been unbecoming and presumptuous in a mere mortal; and, accordingly, if on some occasions he referred to his commission as attested by miracles, on others he spake as the oracle of truth. “Verily, verily, I say unto you,” was the only argument which he usually assigned for his doctrines—the only reason which he alleged for demanding the assent and obedience of his hearers. “The people,” we are told, “were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.”\* This remark is made at the close of his sermon on the mount, throughout which he had spoken in a strain which might well astonish the hearers, because it was different from any thing to which they had been ac-

\* Matt. vii. 28, 29.

customed. The Scribes were regarded as persons of superior wisdom, and the people listened with reverence to these expounders of the law. He treated them as his inferiors, and, without hesitation or ceremony, set aside their maxims as false and licentious. To their instructions, supported as they were by the traditions of the elders, which they pretended to be of equal weight with the written word; to their instructions, which no man hitherto ventured to dispute, he opposed his simple affirmation: "It hath been said," or, "ye have heard that it was said to them of old," but 'I tell you the contrary.'

It is in consequence of the authority with which the instructions of Christ are delivered, that faith is prescribed as a duty. They are not exhibited as matters of speculation, to which we may assent or not, as we feel ourselves disposed. We are bound to believe them and to act upon them, from respect for him, as well as from a regard to our own interest. The gospel is called a law, because it is the will of a superior, and faith is called the obedience of faith. Unbelievers are guilty, not only of rejecting his proffered grace, but also of despising his authority. Hence, the commission which he gives to his apostles, and which authorises the ministry of the word to the end of the world, was enforced by this awful sanction: "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."\*

The last particular which I shall mention, is the efficacy of his instructions. A power accompanies them which was never exerted by human eloquence. "Is not my word as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"† We have a remarkable instance, in the effect produced upon the servants of the Jewish Sanhedrim, who were sent to apprehend our Saviour. They had, no doubt, imbibed the prejudices of their employers against him, and, at any rate, would have executed their commission in order to please them. When they came to the place, Jesus was addressing the people. But their attention was arrested by the sound of his voice; as they listened, their admiration was excited, and, forgetting the purpose for which they had come, they returned, exclaiming, to the no small mortification of the rulers, "Never man spake like this man!"‡ The efficacy of his instructions appears in the success which attended the preaching of his gospel in the primitive ages. Notwithstanding the obstacles which were opposed to it, it spread with such rapidity during the lives of the apostles, that it reached almost every part of the Roman empire, and even some nations lying beyond its frontiers; and, after their decease, it continued to make progress, although its path was marked with blood, till the whole civilized world submitted to its sway. The historian Gibbon has assigned five secondary causes, as he calls them, of its success; meaning, however, that they are the primary or only causes. His causes are obviously inadequate to the production of the effect, and every Christian must view, with triumph, this abortive attempt to rob his religion of the honour of having established its dominion solely by the power of the truth. Its success is a fulfilment of the prophecy: "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."§

Human eloquence, by moving the passions, may lead men to adopt new resolutions, and rouse them to sudden efforts of vigour; it may produce permanent effects in politics, in religious profession, and moral conduct, although, in the latter case, it must be acknowledged, that it has few triumphs to boast. The history of ancient times furnishes only one or two instances, which, if examined by a proper standard, would be found to be of no value. Shall these be brought into comparison with the innumerable trophies which the

\* Mark. xvi. 16.

† Jer. xxiii. 29.

‡ John vii. 46.

§ Ps. cx. 2, 3.



eloquence of our Divine Teacher has won?—with the thousands who, in obedience to his command, have renounced their prejudices, their pleasures, their gains, and their honours, and have submitted to a life of self-denial and suffering? Let us remember, that the word of Christ has prevailed to induce men, not only to embrace a new system of opinions, but to adopt a new manner of living; that it has purified them from their sins, and from sins which once seemed to be essential to their happiness; that it has effected such a revolution in their hearts, that the objects of their love and hatred are exchanged, and new tastes, and tempers, and feelings are displayed, as if they had been created again. As in the days of his flesh, when he said to any man, “Follow thou me,” he forsook all and became his disciple, so it is now; the proudest humbly bow to his command; the most abject slave of the world, bursting his fetters, enters into his service; even the dead hear him and live; for the following words are verified in every age of the Church: “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For, as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.”\*

The efficacy of the instructions of Christ is connected with the operations of grace; and this naturally leads me to remark, that as he teaches men by his word, so he also executes his prophetic office by the agency of the Holy Ghost on their minds. “He reveals to us,” our Church says, “by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.”† Of this double teaching there is an illustrious promise in the Old Testament: “As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.”‡ The promise of the Spirit which our Lord made to his disciples, relates primarily to them, but authorises the expectation of his presence and gracious operation in every age of the Church. Hence he is called the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ;§ and the example of Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, encourages others to pray for his enlightening influences.

But if the Scriptures are a perfect rule of faith and manners, and are expressed with such perspicuity on all subjects essential to salvation, that even the illiterate may understand them, of what use is the Spirit?

In the first place, I remark, that it is not the office of the Spirit to give new revelations. Some, from mere ignorance conceiving that this is understood to be his office, and judging rightly that he is not wanted for any such purpose, have rejected the common doctrine of his operation in the soul. They may have been encouraged in their error by enthusiasts, who, boasting of the Spirit, have pretended to be favoured with supernatural discoveries, and have retailed their extravagant fancies as heavenly visions. But we expressly disclaim this view of the subject, and maintain that he is not sent to teach any thing new, but to enable us to understand in a spiritual manner the truths which are already revealed. In fact, we could hold no other opinion consistently with the principle which we avow, that the canon of Scripture is completed, and that all things are taught in it which are necessary to salvation. Whether God may not, for some important purpose, make known to individuals by his Spirit things secret and future, is a question which we presume not to decide; but such revelations are appropriated to the use of those individuals, and have no claim to the attention of others, unless they were authenticated by miracles; and wanting this attestation, are no more a part of the rule of faith and obedience than any mere human speculation.

\* John v. 25, 26.

† Shorter Cat. Q. 24.

‡ Is. lix. 21.

§ Eph. i. 17.

In the second place, It is not the office of the Spirit to discover to us mysteries and recondite meanings of Scripture, which would have eluded the research of our unassisted faculties. I acknowledge that a man who has received the Holy Ghost, will understand many parts of the Scriptures better than those who have not received him; that he will perceive a beauty, and glory, and goodness in subjects which others regard with the greatest indifference; but I affirm at the same time, that there is no doctrine of religion, of which an unregenerated man may not acquire a speculative notion, by the exercise of his natural understanding. The practice of allegorizing the Scriptures, and affixing senses to them which do not present themselves to ordinary readers, have resulted rather from an affectation of ingenuity, than from any pretension to supernatural illumination. But some persons, mistaking the wild reveries of imagination for the motions of the Divine Spirit, have pretended to sublime discoveries, and brought to light concealed wonders; so that, if any credit were due to them, we should conclude, that truth indeed lies at the bottom of a well, dark and deep, where it must have for ever remained, if they had not been furnished with extraordinary means for drawing it up. There are mysteries in the Scriptures, which no man can explain; there are passages which it requires acuteness of intellect to explore; but in general they are expressed in simple terms, which are to be understood in their usual sense; and the only requisites for the successful study of them are attention and a moderate capacity.

The Holy Ghost teaches, by enabling the mind to perceive the truth, and excellence, and interesting nature of the doctrines of revelation. That his agency is needed for this purpose, none will deny but those who choose to give the lie direct to the Scriptures, and entertain an extravagant idea of the power of reason, which is at variance with the experience of all ages; for, whatever perspicacity reason has discovered in matters of science, it has shown itself to be blind as a mole in religion. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."\* There has been much disputing about the true sense of "the natural man,"—*ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος*;—and an evident wish has been sometimes discovered to give such an explanation as should not represent the mind as wholly incapable, without divine assistance, of forming just views of supernatural truths. The man, of whom the Apostle speaks, has been called the sensual man, the animal man, the man who makes his senses, and passions, and prejudices the standard of judgment; and the character has been supposed to be realized in the heathen philosophers, who rejected the Gospel because it did not accord with their speculations. Whatever English term we may use in translating *ψυχικὸς*, the meaning is obvious to every person who is willing to see it. The natural is opposed to the spiritual man in the next verse; *ψυχικὸς* to *πνευματικὸς*. The same contrast is stated in the epistle of Jude, who says of some, that they are *ψυχικοί*, "having not the Spirit."† The natural man and the spiritual man are opposed to each other. They belong to different classes, and are distinguished by different qualities. The former has only the powers of nature, improved, it may be, by culture; the latter has received a supernatural gift. If you inquire, then, why the natural man cannot discover the things of the Spirit, or the truths of religion? the reason is, that he has not received the Spirit; whence it follows, that the agency of the Holy Ghost is necessary to the illumination of the mind; and this the Apostle plainly signifies when he adds, that the things of the Spirit are spiritually discerned, or can be rightly perceived only by a spiritual man. This single passage is sufficient to prove the necessity of the teaching

\* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

† Jude 19.



of the Holy Ghost. The Scriptures, indeed, are said to be able to make us wise unto salvation; but their sufficiency consists solely in a complete exhibition of truth. Notwithstanding their fulness and clearness, they will make no man savingly wise, unless his understanding be opened to understand them, by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

The manner in which the Spirit acts upon the mind when he illuminates it, is unknown, as is the manner in which our Maker acts upon us, when he assists us in the natural exercise of our mental powers. The one is a mystery of grace, and the other a mystery of nature: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."\*

It is impossible to describe, except in general terms, the knowledge which believers acquire by the teaching of the Spirit, or to show, so as to make the distinction perfectly intelligible, the difference between this knowledge and that which is obtained by the unassisted exercise of our rational faculties. "No words," as I have elsewhere observed, "however carefully and copiously selected, could make a man, who had been born blind, form an idea of light. The views of divine things, which are obtained by the internal revelation, are clear and impressive. Hence, believers are said to "discern" spiritual things, to "behold with open or unveiled face the glory of the Lord, and to be changed into his image." Such evidence accompanies the truth, and such a manifestation is made of its excellence, that the mind feels the highest assurance, and embraces it with ardour and ineffable delight. The Christian enters upon a new scene, and sees around him objects, the grandest and most interesting, which awaken a train of feelings and affections never experienced before. The words of Scripture are the same which he had often read without any emotion, but the thoughts which they excite are exceedingly different. There is a living virtue in the language of inspiration which penetrates into the inmost recesses of his soul; exerts a commanding, transforming influence upon it, and fills it with light, and love, and hope, and activity. A similar change would take place if a man of a gross uncultivated mind were suddenly inspired with those refined perceptions, and that delicate sensibility, which are the foundation of taste. A new light would be poured upon the face of nature. The scenery at which he lately looked with a languid and careless eye, would present features of sublimity and beauty, by which his soul would be alternately filled with awe and delight. Where nothing formerly appeared but a variety of objects, distinguished only by their place and their form, he would now discover order, proportion, harmony, and grace."†

The degree of knowledge is different in different individuals. This is, no doubt, partly owing to a difference in mental capacity; for, without a miracle, a weak illiterate peasant could not take the same comprehensive view of the truths of religion as a scholar and a philosopher. It is not the intention, nor the effect of the operations of the Spirit, to equalize our natural faculties. We might assign, as another cause, the different degrees of diligence, with which the study of the Scriptures is pursued; for this is the promise: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."‡ We must remember, too, that the Spirit distributes his gifts according to his own will; that there is a sovereignty exercised with respect to the measures of grace, as well as the persons to whom it is communicated; and that this is the primary cause, that some so much excel others in all spiritual endowments. But the nature of this illumination is the same in all, in the lowest as in the highest believer. It imparts certainty to the mind; it discovers the excellence and goodness of the truths which are perceived; it is the foundation of faith and holiness, and con-

\* John iii. 8. † Sermons by the Author, Glasg. 1816, pp. 287—9. ‡ Hos. vi. 3.

sequently of final salvation. It is in this way, I apprehend, that we must account for the assurance which all Christians feel of the divine origin and authority of the Scriptures. The arguments by which we prove their inspiration are not generally known. Many have no opportunity of being acquainted with them; nor is every person capable of entering into a train of reasoning by which the several topics are illustrated and confirmed. Yet every believer regards the word of God with unsuspecting confidence as the ground of his hope, and is borne up under all his trials, and in the view of eternity, by its promises. Shall we charge the illiterate christian with implicit faith? No; he has the witness in himself that the Scriptures are true. The marks of divinity which his enlightened mind perceives upon them, and the effects which they produce upon his conscience and heart, convince him that they are what they claim to be, as the sun manifests himself by his own light to every man who has eyes. They have come to him in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. Such was the conviction of the martyr, who declared that he could not reason for Christ, but could die for him.

The degree of knowledge which is necessary to salvation, it would be presumptuous to attempt to determine. We may say safely, that no man will be saved in ignorance; for the first effect of the gracious operations of the Spirit, is "to open the eyes;" that he must know himself to be a sinner, and Christ to be the Saviour; but farther we do not venture to proceed. It belongs not to us to fix the standard, and as, should we do so, there would be danger of its being too high or too low, so it would want all authority, because there is no determination of this kind in the Scriptures. In children whose faculties are beginning to open, and in adults who labour under mental imbecility, the measure of knowledge must be necessarily small. But a faint ray, imparted to the mind from the eternal source of wisdom, is of more value than the full blaze of reason and learning. The revelation vouchsafed to babes, and often denied to the wise and prudent, is sufficient to show the way to eternal life, and to guide them in it, notwithstanding insidious endeavours to draw them aside. "The way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err in it."

As the knowledge which the Spirit communicates is distinguished from other knowledge by its nature, so it is also by its effects. Other knowledge puffs up the mind with a vain conceit of its attainments; but this knowledge creates humility, not only by convincing us how little we know, but by giving a discovery of the guilt and vileness of our natural character. It likewise purifies the soul; for, while other knowledge is a mere exercise of intellect, this affects the heart, awakens new feelings, and tastes, and desires, inspires the love of God, and the noble ambition to be like him. It is a perception and relish of true excellence, consisting in the conformity of the creature to the moral image of its Maker. Hence our Saviour prayed, that his Father would "sanctify" his disciples "through the truth;"\* and an apostle says, "that beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."† It imparts consolation and joy to the soul, while the enlightened man is fully persuaded of the precious promises of the Gospel, and regards its blessings as his own. And when we think of the ineffable satisfaction, the divine peace, the bright and animating hope, which are inspired by the contemplation of the wonders of redemption, we understand the reason that Paul "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord;" and that other holy men have expressed the highest esteem for this word, and a decided preference of it to the wealth, and pleasures, and glory of the world. In a word, this knowledge is introductory to the more sublime discoveries of the

\* John xvii. 17.

† 2 Cor. iii. 18.



future state. The objects which will be contemplated there, are the same which are exhibited in the Gospel; and, so far as any man is enabled, by supernatural illumination, to form just conceptions of them, he anticipates the knowledge which will flow from the beatific vision. The difference is not in kind, but in degree. The one is the knowledge of a child; the other is the knowledge of a man. Wherever the light of heaven has once appeared, it will "shine more and more unto the perfect day," when the mists and clouds which now obscure our prospects will be dispelled, and we shall "know even as we are known:" "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it."\*

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## LECTURE LVI.

### ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

The office of Priest—Necessity of this office of our Redeemer—Christ's call to, and investiture with it—Duties of the office; sacrifice, intercession, and blessing of the people—General observations on Christ's execution of these duties, and on his pre-eminence as a Priest.

EVER since the fall, the hopes of the human race have centred in the Messiah. He is the restorer of our fallen nature, the conqueror of our formidable adversary, the mediator by whose ministry peace with God is procured, the second Adam who has removed the curse pronounced upon us for the sin of the first, and opened the gates of paradise, that we might have access to the tree of life.

The design of the ceremonial institutions and the prophecies of the ancient law was, to make known this illustrious person, to describe his character, and to give notice of the purpose for which he would afterwards appear upon earth. Hence a general expectation of a great deliverer was excited; but the ideas which many entertained of him were the most distant imaginable from the truth. They believed indeed that he would be a prophet; for the words of Moses, and of other inspired men, were too express to be mistaken. They believed also that he would be a king, who, marching forth in the terror of his power, would subjugate the nations, and restore the kingdom to Israel. But they seem not to have believed that he would be a priest; or, if they allowed the title, they explained it in such a manner, as rendered it perfectly nugatory; nothing appearing to them more inconsistent with the office of the Messiah, than the proper work of such a priest, which was to redeem us to God by the sacrifice of himself. He was, however, not only to sit upon a throne, but also to minister at the altar; not only to exert his power for the destruction of his enemies, but to employ his interest with God in our behalf. He was to draw near to the Divine Majesty in our name, and to mediate a peace between us and our offended Creator.

That Jesus Christ is a priest, is plain from many passages of Scripture which it is unnecessary to quote; because, whatever difference of opinion there is among his professed followers with respect to the import of the title when given to him, they all acknowledge that there is a sense in which the

\* Rev. xxi. 23.

office belongs to him. What we mean by calling him a priest, may be learned from the following definition of the character, although it does not comprehend every particular of the office. "Every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."\* It is to the last part of the definition that I at present request your attention. A priest is a person officiating in the name of others, who approaches to God to make atonement for them by sacrifice. The design of his ministration is to render the object of worship propitious, to avert his wrath from men, and to procure their restoration to his favour. He differs from a prophet, who treats with men in the name of God, making known to them his counsels and commands; while a priest treats with God in the name of men, to prevail upon him to admit them into friendship. It was in this sense of the word, that Aaron and his successors were priests. Their proper work was not to instruct the people, but to serve at the altar, and lay those oblations upon it which the law required for the expiation of sins. It cannot be denied that the title of priest is sometimes given to men not in a literal but in a figurative sense. Thus Christians are called a "royal priesthood,"† and are said to be "made priests" as well as "kings to God."‡ It is evident, however, that in this case there is merely an accommodation of the title, because they minister to God in the duties of religious worship, and present the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, which ascend with acceptance to his throne, like the smoke of rams and bullocks, and of the incense which was burnt in the sanctuary. A proper priest offers a proper sacrifice.

A question here demands our attention, because it has been the subject of much and vehement discussion among Christians, Whether it was necessary that our Redeemer should sustain this office? The negative is held by those who believe that God might have pardoned sin without a satisfaction; and the affirmative, by those who are persuaded that it would have been inconsistent with the purity and rectitude of his nature, to permit sin to pass with impunity. It is certain that God is represented as a Holy Being, as necessarily and infinitely holy, so that in the strong language of Scripture, "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity."§ There is here an allusion to men, to whom some objects are so disgusting, that they avert their eyes and find it impossible to look at them without doing violence to their feelings. The divine abhorrence of sin could not be more emphatically stated than by this mode of expression. God can do every thing which is consistent with his essential perfections; he can do nothing which is contrary to them, and he cannot because he will not. It is not the want of physical but of moral power which is ascribed to him. Now, if it is impossible that God should ever regard sin with favour, it is impossible that he should suffer it to go unpunished; his nature forbids such an act of sovereign, unconditional mercy. To impress this idea, his holiness is represented as his "jealousy," or as accompanied with it. "He is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins."|| It is the nature of jealousy not to spare, and nothing but the execution of vengeance will satisfy its demands. This awful truth is declared in the solemn proclamation of his name, when he said that "He will by no means clear the guilty,"¶—that is, the guilty for whom no atonement has been made. "God is jealous," says the prophet Nahum, "and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies."\*\* It is to represent the punishment of the wicked as the consequence of his holiness, that our God is said to be a "consuming fire."†† Fire, indeed,

\* Heb. v. 1. † 1 Pet. ii. 9. ‡ Rev. i. 6. § Hab. i. 13. || Josh. xxiv. 19.

¶ Exod. xxxiv. 7.

\*\* Nahum i. 2

†† Deut. iv. 24.



burns by necessity of nature—God does not so act in any external operation. His dispensations originate in his will; but his will is always conformable to his essential perfections. Is it not then plainly signified by this figurative description, that as fire consumes every combustible substance which it reaches, so the nature of God requires that the transgression of his law should be punished, unless some expedient be devised to reconcile the exercise of his mercy with the honour of his holiness?

Again, the necessity of the priesthood of Christ may be inferred from the justice of God. As there is an essential rectitude of his nature, in consequence of which every thing which he does is right, sustaining the character of the moral Governor of the universe, he will render to all his creatures their due. Justice is ascribed to him in many passages of Scripture; and reason perceives so clearly that it belongs to him, that the question may be proposed as admitting only one answer, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”\* What it is right for him to do in the character of a Judge, we learn from the law which he has given to men, and in which death is denounced as the penalty of sin. Let it not be imagined that this is an arbitrary penalty; for, since it would be a reproach to a human legislator to subject crimes to a severer punishment than they deserved, or than was necessary to maintain the authority of his law, we could not impute such procedure to God without a direct impeachment of his benignity and clemency. It is right, therefore, that transgressors should suffer to the extent threatened in the law. There is something in their conduct which deserves this punishment; and it is suitable to the moral perfections of God to inflict it. Now, let us consider what is implied in the supposition that God might have pardoned sin without an atonement. It is implied, either that it was not right that sin should be punished, that is, that it was not absolutely right, that it was not agreeable to the nature of God, that justice did not demand it; or that, in order to exercise his mercy, he might do what was not right. It is impossible to maintain that sin might have been pardoned without an atonement, unless we at the same time affirm that punishment was not necessarily due to sin, or that God was not bound to recompense it according to its desert. If any man shall adopt the latter opinion, he must say, that what we call the justice of God is not justice, or that, when attributed to him and attributed to men, it has a different meaning. We always conceive justice, in a private or public person, to consist in treating others exactly according to their desert: and, consequently, it is equally contrary to justice to let merit go without reward, and demerit without punishment. If it be alleged that, although justice requires that the penalty of his law should be executed, he may set aside its claims by an act of authority, I would request you to consider attentively the import of this assumption. If justice has a claim, to dispense with it is to do something which, if justice would have been permitted to take its course, would not have been done. This is plain. Justice demands the punishment of sin—but the demand is not complied with, and therefore justice does not receive what is due to it. It follows, that to suppose that God may dispense with the claims of justice, is to suppose that he may cease to be just. Some men may not be alarmed at this consequence; but let it be observed that, if God may set aside in any case the demands of justice, justice is not essential to him; we can no longer have confidence in the rectitude of his moral administration; nor can his laws be regarded with the same reverence as when they were understood to be guarded by the immutable sanction of death. As the moral Governor of the universe, God is bound, if I may speak so, to maintain the respect due to himself by the strict distribution of rewards and punishments, and to hold

\* Gen. xviii. 25.

out the most powerful motives to obey his law, which is not an arbitrary institution, but is founded on the relations subsisting between him and his creatures.

The inference from the preceding reasoning is, that the priesthood of Jesus Christ was necessary, if God was to pardon sinners, and receive them into favour. It is this hypothetical necessity alone which we assert; as his suspension of the office was voluntary, so his investiture with it by his Father was an act of his sovereign grace. God was under no obligation to renew the intercourse between himself and man, which had ceased at the fall.

“No man,” says Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”\* The necessity of a divine call is manifest from the nature of the case. A priest ministers before God in the name of men, to effect a reconciliation between them. Now, although it is their interest which is connected with the office, and no advantage can redound from it to God, yet they have not the power of appointing the priest, for two reasons; first, because it depends solely upon the will of God whether a priest shall be admitted at all; and secondly, because it is his prerogative to declare who is acceptable to him, and proper to be entrusted with so important a work. “So also,” the apostle adds, “Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.”† Great as his love was to sinners, he interposed in their behalf only in concurrence with his Father, and in obedience to his will.

With respect to the time of his investiture with this office, it was coincident with his appointment to the general office of mediator. At that time, he was constituted the prophet, the priest, and the king of his Church. The manner of his consecration has been explained in different ways. He was consecrated, it has been said, at his baptism; and this is so far true, because he was then solemnly dedicated to the service of his Father; but he possessed the office before, and performed its duties, both by bearing our griefs and carrying our infirmities, while yet, in a private character, he led a life of poverty, labour and suffering of various kinds, and by the intercessory prayers which he no doubt offered up for the salvation of his people. It is the opinion of that eminent and learned divine, Dr. Owen, that he was consecrated by the shedding of his own blood, as Aaron and his sons were by the blood of the sacrifices; and this he conceives to be the import of the expression, “made perfect through sufferings.”‡ But this notion we can by no means admit, because it seems to be absurd to suppose a person to be consecrated to an office, by doing the duties of it; to hold it, and proceed to perform its most important functions, before he is properly invested with it. His being “perfected through sufferings” evidently means, that, by his death upon the cross, he became the Captain or the Author of our salvation, having offered that atoning sacrifice, which obtained eternal redemption for us. It appears that he was consecrated by the oath of God, of which we shall afterwards speak, because it is an important fact in the history of his priesthood, and, as such, is mentioned in Scripture. “The law maketh men high priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.”§

The two great duties of the sacerdotal office, are sacrifice and intercession; to which may be added a third, the blessing of the people, as Aaron and his sons were commanded to do. I do not think it necessary to take any farther notice of the last in relation to our Saviour’s office, because it does not appear that, as a priest, he blesses us in any other way than by dying to procure, and

\* Heb. v. 4.    † Ib. 5.    ‡ Heb. ii. 10. Owen on Heb. *in loco*.    § Heb. vii. 28.



by obtaining, through his intercession, the communication of blessings to us. It is properly in the character of a king that he bestows them.

The first duty of his office he performed upon earth, when he presented to God the immaculate oblation of himself upon the cross. "He that loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour."\* This would be the place to prove that the death of Christ was a true and proper sacrifice for sin; but I shall postpone this discussion to another occasion, as my design, in this lecture, is merely to give you a general view of his priesthood. There are some who deny that he offered a sacrifice for sin, namely, those who were formerly called Socinians, but now have taken the name of Unitarians. The doctrine of that heretical sect is, in substance, the following:—that Jesus Christ is called a priest, but is not such in reality; that he receives this title, on account of some resemblance between what he does, and the ministration of the priests under the law; that he is a priest, in the same metaphorical sense in which all Christians are said to be priests; and, that his priesthood solely consists in the good offices which he performs towards us, and on our account. He properly entered upon it when he ascended to heaven, and received power from his Father to assist men in working out their salvation; his death upon the cross was no part of his duty, but merely a preparation for the services of the heavenly sanctuary; his priestly office is virtually the same with the kingly, both implying authority and ability to bestow blessings upon men, and differing only in this respect, that, as a king, he has power to help us, and, as a priest, he is willing.—This was the doctrine of the elder Socinians, and has been generally adopted by their successors. I know not well what are the sentiments of the Unitarians of the present day; but some of them, "waxing worse and worse," like other "evil men and seducers," are actively employed in reducing the character of our Saviour lower and lower, and seem not to be able to tell where he now is, or what he is doing. I content myself, at present, with simply stating their doctrine, as an opportunity will afterwards occur, of showing its contrariety to Scripture.

There is another Socinian notion, which, however, has been adopted by some who are not Socinians, but believe that the death of Christ was a sacrifice for sin, namely, that he did not offer his sacrifice on earth, but in heaven, by appearing before God in the body in which he suffered on the cross. You will find this notion stated and defended by Dr. Macknight, in the notes on the epistle to the Hebrews; an author, I may take this opportunity of saying, from whose work on the Epistles a cautious and discerning reader may derive considerable advantage, but who is a dangerous guide to young students, not only because he dogmatizes in rather an unusual manner in matters of great importance, giving only his own affirmation for proof, but also, because many of his principles are false, and there are few who have distinguished themselves more by wresting and misinterpreting the Scriptures. This notion is at direct variance with the language of Scripture, which uniformly speaks of the sacrifice of Christ as having been offered before he entered into heaven. "Christ was once offered," says Paul, "to bear the sins of many,"† evidently meaning, that he was offered upon earth, because he contrasts this act with his future revelation from heaven. "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."‡ His sitting down at the right hand of God was immediately consequent upon his entrance into heaven, before which he had purged our sins by his sacrifice. "By his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption."§ The obtaining of eternal redemption is put in the past tense,—

\* Eph. v. 2.

† Heb. ix. 28.

‡ Heb. i. 3.

§ Heb. ix. 12.

*ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ*,—and preceded his entrance into the holy place. But he obtained it, as all will acknowledge, by his sacrifice, which, therefore, was offered not in heaven, but upon earth. Great stress is laid upon these words of Paul, “If he were on earth, he should not be a priest.”\* But, if they furnish any evidence in favour of the present opinion, they prove more than its patrons would be willing to grant, namely, that while our Saviour was in this world, he was not a priest at all. This no man who believes the Scriptures would affirm. The meaning certainly is, that, if his office had been of the same kind with the priesthood which already existed upon earth, he could not have been a priest, because the office was vested in a family of which he was not a member; or that, if his whole office was to be executed upon earth, he must have been excluded, because, not belonging to the family of Aaron, he had no access to the holy of holies in the temple, in which alone his blood could be presented. The notion, that Christ offered his sacrifice in heaven, is one of those niceties which are sometimes brought forward as mighty discoveries, but which, although they were founded on truth, are of no practical utility. As it is, it overturns the ideas respecting sacrifices which men have entertained in all ages and nations, making them consist, not in the death of the victim, as has been always believed, but in the sprinkling of its blood; and it furnishes a pretext for those who are so minded, to deny that Christ offered any proper sacrifice, and to affirm that his whole work consists in intercession.

The second duty of his office is intercession. It was typified by the entrance of the high priest into the most holy place, where he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices, and burned incense before the mercy-seat; and it is carried on in heaven, of which that place was a figure. What is the nature of his intercession, how it is conducted, who are its subjects, and what is its design, are points, the consideration of which I shall reserve for another occasion.† According to the scheme of the elder Socinians, his priestly office was executed in heaven alone; but, although they could not deny that intercession belonged to his office, they explained even it away, as well as his sacrifice, and affirmed, that it signified merely that he obtained from God the power by which he is able to help us, as if he had prayed for it. A similar scheme has been contrived by some modern Socinians, which may be stated in the words of a celebrated writer. “Jesus Christ has not only taught the pure doctrines of the gospel; manifested, by rising from the dead, the certainty of a future state, and proposed to mankind a pattern for imitation; but has, by the merits of his obedience, obtained, through his intercession, as a reward, a kingdom or government over the world, whereby he is enabled to bestow pardon and final happiness upon all who will accept them on the terms of sincere repentance. That is, in other words, we receive salvation through a mediator; the mediation conducted through intercession; and that intercession successful, in recompence of the meritorious obedience of our Redeemer.”‡ In this scheme, the atonement is left out, and our salvation is owing to the death of Christ only remotely, as it constituted the ground on which he obtained, by his prayers, power to save such as should sincerely embrace his religion. But his intercession has a different object, as we shall afterwards show.

Our Lord was made a priest “after the order of Melchisedec.”§ The apostle Paul explains what is meant, when he says of Melchisedec, that he was “without father, without mother, without descent,” and that “having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, he abideth a priest continually.”|| It is certain that, being a man, he was born and died like other men, and had a genealogy which was known to his contemporaries; but Paul refers to his

\* Heb. viii. 4.

† See Lecture LIX.

‡ Magee on Atonement, vol. i. p. 20.

§ Heb. v. 6.

|| Heb. vii. 3.



history, which on these subjects preserves profound silence, and speaks of him only in his public character, and in relation to his office. He is an insulated individual, like a man fallen from the clouds, who had no earthly connexions, except that, as he was a priest and a king, there must have been persons for whom he ministered, and over whom he reigned. The similitude between our Saviour and Melchisedec may be traced in the two following particulars.

First, He had no predecessor in office. He was indeed made a priest after the order of Melchisedec; but you are not to understand that he was a priest of the same order, because, on this supposition, the resemblance between them would be destroyed in an essential particular. Christ did not succeed Melchisedec, but he is like him; and like him in this respect, that none was before him. Aaron and his sons were not his predecessors; for he could not have succeeded them unless he had belonged to the family to which the legal priesthood was confined by the express commandment of God. "It is evident," says Paul, "that our Lord sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood."\* He succeeded them, indeed, as the antitype succeeds the type; but his priesthood was of a different kind. Theirs was a shadow, but his was the truth; theirs consisted in offering animals upon the altar, but his in offering himself; theirs averted temporal punishments from the Israelites, but his has delivered mankind from the guilt of sin, and from eternal perdition.

Secondly, Jesus Christ has no successor in the priesthood. It is in the perpetuity of his office that the resemblance between him and Melchisedec principally consists. When Aaron died, Eleazar his son stood up in his room; and all the high-priests of that family were succeeded by their sons and relations, till the second temple was destroyed; but no person will ever succeed our Saviour: and this difference between him and the priests of the law, was founded on two important circumstances:—

In the first place, "They truly were many priests," as Paul says, "because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death."† Notwithstanding the great dignity of their office, and the solemnities with which they were installed in it, they were but men, subject to infirmity and dissolution, like the persons for whom they ministered. "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood."‡ He likewise died; but the cases were totally dissimilar. The legal priests died, if I may speak so, out of office; but he died in it. Death was no part of their work, whereas to die was the chief duty incumbent upon him. When they fell under the power of death, they could not extricate themselves from it, and return to life and the service of the sanctuary; but he had power to lay down his life and to take it again. Death was so far from putting an end to his priesthood, that it did not even interrupt the exercise of it.

In the second place, A succession of the legal priests was necessary, because the sacrifices which they offered could not expiate sin. Notwithstanding their mortality, if any of them could have appeased divine justice by his oblations, there would have been no necessity that another should rise up in his stead. But the legal sacrifices could not atone for past sins, and still less for those which were future; the blood of an irrational animal was not equivalent to the blood and life of the transgressor himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ "hath by one offering for ever perfected them that were sanctified."§ His sacrifice removed the sins of his people in one day; it established, upon a solid basis, peace between God and his offending creatures; it is the ground of an everlasting dispensation of pardon and mercy. Hence it appears that

\* Heb. vii. 14.

† Ib. vii. 23.

‡ Ib. vii. 24.

§ Ib. x. 14.

there was no reason why another priest should succeed him, and that no place was left for the ministrations of another, which could serve no valuable purpose, as the great design of the office had been already accomplished, namely, the expiation of sin.

The death of Christ was a sacrifice, not for one generation alone, but for men in every age. He ever lives to make intercession in the heavenly sanctuary; and hence he is "able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him."\* No other priest, therefore, can arise. There remains nothing for him to do. Christ has made sacrifice and oblation to cease, and has gone into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us.

It is derogatory to the honour of Christ, and subversive of the doctrine of the Scripture concerning his priesthood, to maintain that any person is now invested with the priestly office, and performs its proper work. It implies that he did not fully accomplish the design of his office, and destroys the resemblance between him and Melchizedec. Yet the church of Rome calls her ministers priests; (and so likewise does the church of England, from an imitation which is the more inexcusable, as she rejects the doctrine upon which alone an argument could be founded for giving them this title;)—the church of Rome calls her ministers priests, and affirms that they perform the proper work of the priesthood by offering sacrifice. Jesus Christ, into whose body and blood the bread and wine in the eucharist are transubstantiated, is offered up in the mass by the officiating minister, as a sacrifice for the dead and the living. If this opinion were true, the ministers of antichrist would be more truly priests than Aaron and his sons; because the latter offered only typical sacrifices, while the former daily repeat the great sacrifice which procures eternal redemption. But this superstructure rests upon a foundation of sand. The sacred supper is merely a commemorative ordinance. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."† The Christian religion acknowledges only one priest, who was consecrated by God himself, and is exalted to heaven. Those who assume this character encroach upon his prerogative; and to suppose them to be what they pretend, would be to consider our Redeemer as a priest, not after the order of Melchizedec, but after the order of Aaron, which admitted successors.

Jesus Christ excelled all that were before him in respect of the order of his priesthood. There are other points of difference, from which it appears that, according to the words of an apostle, "he has obtained a more excellent ministry,"‡ and of which I shall briefly take notice in the sequel of this lecture.

First, He was superior to all other priests in personal dignity. They were "men having infirmity," subject to disease and death, and not to these alone, but also to error and sin; and therefore they needed to offer for themselves as well as for the people. How much superior is our High-priest! Considered as a man, he is distinguished from all other men, not only by his miraculous conception, his sublime wisdom, and his stupendous works, but by his immaculate purity, which he retained amidst the strongest temptations. But besides his pre-eminence in moral worth, he was still more exalted above all who might be compared with him, by the dignity of his nature, for in consequence of his mysterious union to the second person of the Trinity, he was truly the Son of God. While he is said to have "purged our sins," he is described as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and as upholding all things by the word of his power."§ Surely, he is the most glorious of all the ministers of God! and the office derives a lustre from him who sustained it.

Secondly, the manner in which he was invested with his office was pecu

Heb. vii. 25.

† Ibid. ix. 23.

‡ Ibid. viii. 6.

§ Ibid. i. 3.



liar; and it is expressly mentioned in order to demonstrate his superiority. "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made a priest, (for those priests were made without an oath, but this with an oath, by him that said unto him, 'The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec,') by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant."\* This circumstance alone is sufficient to prove the pre-eminence of his priesthood. It is not upon slight occasions that God interposes by an oath; and if he did not swear when Aaron and his sons were set apart to the service of the altar, but observed this unusual solemnity in the consecration of his Son, may we not conclude that there were interests of far greater importance depending upon his ministry? The design of the priesthood of Aaron was to prevent the dissolution of the covenant, which God had made with the Israelites. The design of the priesthood of Christ was the establishment of a better covenant, by which God would be glorified, and our lost world redeemed. The oath was intended to assure us that God himself invested him with the office; that as a priest he is the object of his highest approbation; that he will never take the priesthood from him, nor cease to be pleased with the atonement which he made by the effusion of his blood. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent."

Thirdly, The oblation which he presented was far more valuable than the ancient sacrifices. He offered not the firstlings of the flock, and the choicest of the herd, but himself. He was at once the priest and the sacrifice. What raised the worth of his sacrifice above all calculation was his personal dignity, of which we have already spoken. He who was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem was the Lord of glory, although the princes of this world did not recognise him in such profound humiliation; the blood with which the church was redeemed was the blood of God, although the priests and rulers of the Jews, who saw it streaming from his wounds, despised it as the blood of an impious malefactor. The Godhead, it is acknowledged, is impassible; but from the union of the two natures of Christ, there resulted a communication of properties, in consequence of which the acts of both belonged to the same person, and are predicated of each other. That nature died which alone could die; but it was the nature of him who was higher than the kings of the earth and the angels of heaven, because he and his Father are one. Compared with this oblation, those which were offered with such pomp in the temple of Jerusalem were weak and childish things, and would be altogether unworthy of notice, were it not that God himself appointed them, and that they derived a borrowed importance from their typical relation to the sacrifice of Christ, the only sacrifice which God ever accepted for its own sake, and which satisfied the demands of his justice. Accordingly, the legal sacrifices are declared to be inefficient, and are laid aside, while the sacrifice of Christ is substituted in their room. "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo! I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first," says the apostle, "that he may establish the second."†

Fourthly, Let us observe for whom Jesus Christ officiated as a priest. The sacrifices of the Mosaic law were appointed for the Israelites; the annual atonement was made for none but the twelve tribes, and their names alone were engraven on the breastplate which the High-priest wore when he went into the holy of holies. Jesus Christ is the High-priest of the human race, and his blood was shed for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. "He is a pro-

\* Heb. vii. 20—22.

† Ibid. x. 5—9.

propitiation for the sins of the whole world.”\* He suffered, therefore, not in the temple which was the sanctuary of the Jews, nor within the precincts of Jerusalem, the capital of their country, lest it should be imagined that they were the sole objects of redemption, but without the gates of the city, to signify that he was the Saviour of mankind, and that there was salvation through his cross to those who should turn their eyes to him from the ends of the earth. We do not affirm that he died for every individual of the human race. This extent some have assigned to his atonement; but, although it is their design to give a magnificent idea of its efficacy, their doctrine is really derogatory to its excellence. For upon this supposition it will follow, that as every individual is not saved, his sacrifice has failed of its end in the case of those who perish in guilt, and his blood has been shed in vain. He died for those whom his Father gave to him; but how great their number is, no man can tell. All ages have experienced the benefit of his death, the influence of which was retrospective and prospective, extending backward to the beginning of time, and forward to its close. For his sake God was merciful to those who lived before his coming in the flesh, pardoning them in the view of the satisfaction to be afterwards made; and now we know that there is salvation in no other, and that there is not another name under heaven given among men, by which they can be saved.

Lastly, The effect of his sacrifice demonstrates its transcendent excellence. No person, who has just notions of the evil and demerit of sin, can believe that the sacrifices of the law could appease the justice of God, and obtain his favour to the guilty. Reason gives a ready assent to the declaration of an apostle, that “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”† Their sole effect was to deliver the offerer from temporal punishment, whether to be inflicted by the civil magistrate or by the hand of God himself. He was permitted to live, and to enjoy his privileges, although he deserved to be cut off for his transgression from among his people. But he had no security against eternal condemnation, and fell under it at death, if he had not an interest by faith in that better sacrifice, of which those which he had presented were merely shadows. The oblation of Christ satisfied every demand of justice, and cancelled the sentence pronounced by the moral law upon all who have violated its precepts: “He finished the transgression, and made an end of sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness.”‡ Hence forgiveness is preached through him; and those who believe “are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.”§ Nothing is necessary to our full pardon, but faith in the great propitiation; no supplementary penances of our own, no kind of satisfactory works. A foundation is thus laid for perfect peace of mind; and the only reason that believers do not always enjoy it, is the weakness and unsteadiness of their faith. No purpose of vengeance against them ever arises in the mind of God, however great are their provocations. He may frown upon them; but it is the frown of a father, who will not cast off his son, although he is displeased with his conduct; he may chasten, but it is the hand of love which wields the rod, and the design of every stroke is the good of the sufferer.

It appears from what has been said, that the priesthood of Christ is not a speculative point, but a doctrine intimately connected with our duties and our hopes. It is the foundation of all acceptable religion; and had he not sustained this office, intercourse between heaven and earth would have been for ever suspended, and God and men would have been separated by irreconcilable hostility. The religion of man in a state of innocence was founded on the

\* 1 John ii. 2.

† Heb. x. 4.

‡ Dan. ix. 24.

§ Acts xiii. 39.



natural relations subsisting between him and his Creator, to whom, as the author of his being, he owed obedience, and from whose goodness he was authorized to hope for felicity continued through an endless duration. But when sin had introduced mutual alienation, the interposition of a third party was necessary to adjust their opposing interests, and to unite them in the bond of friendship. As God can thus be merciful without ceasing to be just, so the way is prepared for the acceptance of our duties, notwithstanding the imperfections with which they are attended. Coming from us, who are so polluted that every thing is tainted which we touch, they are unworthy of the divine regard; but they are purified by passing through the hands of "the Minister of the true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched, and not men."\* This is an unspeakable advantage which Christians derive from the priesthood of Christ; for, although they should multiply their services, and perform them with assiduity and earnestness, they would not be pleasing to God, if he did not recommend them. As, while the sword of the cherubim waved dreadfully before the gate of paradise, our first parents could not have forced their way to the tree of life, the seat of immortality; so, the curse of the broken law rendered access to the throne of grace equally impossible to us their descendants; but Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life," or the true and living way; and "having him as our High-priest over the house of God, we may draw near with true hearts in the full assurance of faith."

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## LECTURE LVII.

### ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

Death of Christ, a propitiatory Sacrifice—Socinian View of his Death; Its Defects—The middle Scheme: Objections to it—Proof of the catholic Doctrine—The Idea of sacrificial Atonement prevalent among the Heathen—Sacrifices of Atonement, a Part of the Jewish Worship—Import of the Language of Scripture respecting the Death of Christ.

THE death of Christ is one of the most remarkable events recorded in history. Many ages before it happened, it was foretold by those men whom God raised up to uphold the authority of his law among his chosen people, and to direct their thoughts and expectations to a future and more perfect dispensation. David, Isaiah, and Daniel described the Messiah not only as a person of high dignity, and the Author of the most glorious works, but also as one who should lead a lowly and afflicted life, and terminate his labours and sorrows by a painful and violent death. The cause or occasion of it was singular; for it was not the effect of accident, or disease, or the decay of nature, but was inflicted by a judicial sentence pronounced upon him for the supposed crimes of imposture and blasphemy. The obscuration of the sun at mid-day without any natural cause, the earthquake which clove asunder the rocks and laid open the graves, and the rending of the veil of the temple from top to bottom, proclaimed that he who was hanging on the cross was no ordinary sufferer. He had not lain three full days in the grave, when he was restored to life by the power of God; and, after an interval of a few weeks, he ascended to heaven in presence of his disciples. Ten days after, he poured out the Holy Ghost, by whom they were enabled to publish to men of every nation,

\* Heb. viii. 2.

in their respective languages, the wonders of his death and resurrection; and the effect was not less surprising than the means employed to accomplish it. The attention of Jews and Gentiles was excited; multitudes were prevailed upon to acknowledge him to be the Son of God, and the Messiah; and a church was formed, which, notwithstanding powerful opposition and cruel persecution, subsists at the present hour. The death of Christ was the great subject on which the apostles were commanded to preach, although it was known beforehand, that it would be offensive to all classes of men; and they actually made it the chosen theme of their discourses. "I determined," Paul says, "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."\* An ordinance was appointed by our Saviour himself on the night preceding his crucifixion, for the express purpose of being a memorial of it to the end of the world. In the New Testament, his death is represented as an event of the greatest importance,—as a fact on which Christianity rests,—as the only ground of hope to the guilty,—as the only source of peace and consolation,—as, of all motives, the most powerful, to excite us to mortify sin, and to devote ourselves to the service of God. It is remembered in heaven, and we have reason to believe that it now is, and ever will be, the theme of the songs both of the redeemed and of angels: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and strength, and glory, and blessing."†

It is evident from this detail, that there is something peculiar in the death of Christ, something which distinguishes it from all other events of the same kind, and renders it more worthy of attention. It is necessary, therefore, that we should entertain just conceptions of it; by which I do not merely mean, that we should know when it happened, and with what circumstances it was attended, but that we should endeavour to ascertain from the Scriptures what was our Saviour's design in submitting to die upon the cross. From the earliest ages Christians have believed that his death was an atonement for sin, a sacrifice offered to God to satisfy his justice, and avert his wrath from the guilty; that it was the means of reconciling us to our offended Creator, the procuring cause of pardon and eternal life. In this view of it, all the great bodies into which professed Christians are divided are agreed,—the Eastern and the Western Church, Papists and Protestants, Calvinists and Arminians. They may differ in their explanation of the nature of the atonement, its extent, and the means of its application; but with regard to the general truth, that the death of Christ was propitiatory, there is no conflict of opinion. This may be considered as a presumption in favour of the doctrine, and at least shows that there is an apparent foundation for it in the Scriptures; because if there were no trace of it there, we could not well account for the consent of so many parties, separated on other points by so wide an interval. It will hardly be denied, that the Scriptures seem to favour this view, by using language, in speaking of his death, which was appropriated to the sacrificial institutions of the law; and those whose interest it is to evade this evidence, confess its existence by their anxious and violent endeavours to bring the style of the New Testament to a consistency with their system.

The doctrine which has been received by the Catholic church, is controverted by one class of nominal Christians, by the same persons who deny the divinity of our Saviour, and maintain his simple humanity. Those two articles of their creed harmonize, for if Jesus Christ was a mere man, it is impossible to believe that his death possessed such merit as to redeem that great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. They alone can with any appearance of reason consider

\* 1 Cor. ii. 2.

† Rev. v. 12.



his death as an expiation of sin, who are persuaded that the blood shed upon Calvary was divine. It would be absurd to suppose, that the sufferings of a common descendant of Adam, who was himself not exempt from human frailties and imperfections, were accepted as a full compensation for myriads of transgressions. The following is a summary of the sentiments of Unitarians.

“The great object of the mission and death of Christ, was to give the fullest proof of a state of retribution, in order to supply the strongest motive to virtue; and the making an express regard to the doctrine of a resurrection to immortal life, the principal sanction of the laws of virtue, is an advantage peculiar to Christianity. By this advantage the gospel reforms the world, and the remission of sin is consequent on reformation. For although there are some texts in which the pardon of sin seems to be represented as dispensed in consideration of the suffering, the merits, the resurrection, the life or the obedience of Christ, we cannot but conclude, upon a careful examination, that all those views of it are partial representations, and that according to the plain general tenor of Scripture, the pardon of sin is in reality always dispensed by the free mercy of God, upon account of man’s personal virtue, a penitent upright heart, and a reformed exemplary life, without regard to the sufferings or merit of any being whatever.” Thus the propitiatory nature of the death of Christ is discarded; and, according to them, when the Scripture says, that he gave himself for us, that he died for our sins, that we have redemption through his blood,—all that is intended is, that his doctrine, confirmed by his death, is the means of leading us to repentance and amendment of life, in consequence of which we are pardoned, and entitled to a happy immortality. It is a thought which will naturally occur to you, that if this is the actual amount of what the Scriptures teach upon this subject, the terms which the sacred writers have employed, serve only to encumber and darken the sense; and that it would have been better to have expressed the simple truth in plain terms not liable to be misunderstood, and not to have enveloped it in metaphors and allusions, by which thousands have been misled.

Let us attend more particularly to the account which is given of the death of Christ by those who deny the atonement, that having found their reasons to be inadequate, we may be the better prepared to receive the catholic doctrine, which alone accords with the statements of the sacred writers.

Sometimes they speak of his death as an accidental event, as having taken place in consequence of the wickedness and perverseness of the age in which he appeared, and thus insinuate that among a different people he might have escaped without persecution. How contrary this opinion is to truth, and to the belief of a particular providence, they need not to be told, who remember that he was delivered up by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, and that his death was predicted by the prophets, and prefigured by the institutions of the law. If it was accidental, it is evident that no stress can be laid upon it, that it could not be an essential part of the scheme of religion which God was carrying on, and that, in itself, it was of no greater moment than the death of any other good man who has fallen a victim to calumny and malignity.

There is a notion entertained by Socinians, which if true would militate against the supposition that the death of Christ ought to be considered as an atonement for sin, or that any merit attached to it; for they hold that death is not the penalty of transgression, but the consequence of the original law of our nature. Man would have died, or might have died, although he had continued in innocence. When Jesus Christ therefore expired, we may apply to him the expression, which however common is very inaccurate, that he paid the last debt to nature: and since he was originally mortal, his death was not an act of choice, and could not be a voluntary sacrifice. I need not stop to

refute this opinion, the falsity of which was demonstrated when we pointed out the effects of Adam's transgression. It is sufficient to repeat the well known words of the Apostle, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;"\* and the words of our Lord, "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."†

But although Socinians have sometimes talked in this loose manner, that the death of Christ might excite as little attention as possible, yet they have found it necessary from the general tenor of Scripture, to admit that it had some important end, and have racked their invention in order to give a plausible account of it.

In the first place, They tell us that he died to give us an example of patience, resignation, faith and hope; and thus far they are countenanced by Scripture, which says, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps;"‡ and addresses this exhortation to us: "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind."§ But the question is, Was this the only design of his sufferings? Does the giving of an example exhaust the meaning of the language of Scripture on this subject? We grant that he has left us an example, but we deny that this was the only object which he had in view; and we pronounce it to be false reasoning to hold any single end which is gained, to be the only end contemplated by the person who employed the means. Every man knows the distinction between a subordinate and an ultimate end, and is aware that, unless both be considered, we do not understand the design of the agent. If it was the sole purpose of the death of Christ, to give us an example, we cannot avoid thinking that the means were disproportionate to the end; and it seems incredible that a just and good Being would have subjected a person so excellent as Unitarians acknowledge him to have been, pure and spotless in his life, and richly furnished with supernatural gifts, to the most cruel torments, solely that we might learn how to behave under our afflictions. We might have been taught this lesson at less expence; and it does not appear to be a happy expedient for recommending submission, to place before us the spectacle of a person enduring the severest sufferings, although he had neither sinned himself, nor become responsible for the sins of others. The moral efficacy which is ascribed to the example, is destroyed by the nature of the case. Nothing will induce us to acquiesce in the will of God, when its operations are painful to our feelings, but a full conviction of his justice and benevolence. But the agony and blood of one who had never offended, are calculated to create fear and distrust, and to represent the Ruler of the universe, rather as a despot than as the Father of the human race.

In the second place, they tell us that he died to attest the truth of his doctrine. I grant that this is true, but in a sense which they will not allow. He died to confirm the promises of God, by paying the price of the blessings exhibited in them, and securing the enjoyment of them to believers. "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God."|| But his death had this effect, because it was an atonement for sin, by which the anger of God was appeased, and his favour was restored. I deny that he was a simple martyr for the truth, and is to be classed with Stephen, and James, and Antipas, and other holy men, who have sealed their testimony to religion with their blood. Considered in itself, his death would not have proved the truth of his doctrine; it would have proved only that he was fully persuaded of its truth. This is all that we can justly infer from the sacrifice which a man

\* Rom. v. 12. † John x. 18. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 21. § Ib. iv. 1. || 2 Cor. i. 20.



makes for his principles; if we go any farther, as there have been martyrs for different religions, we should be compelled to conclude, that they are all equally true. It was not necessary that he should die to confirm his doctrine, because he had already established it upon the solid basis of his miracles. To these he appealed, saying, "Believe me for the very work's sake."\* They demonstrate that he was a messenger from God, and consequently, that whatever he delivered in the name of God, was to be received without murmuring and disputing. They were admitted as evidence by all persons of candour, and with respect to those who were dissatisfied, we may say, that they would not have believed, although one had risen from the dead. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him."† Hence we conclude, that this was not the design of his death. His dying for the truth could not have afforded clearer evidence than his miracles, nor considered in itself, evidence so clear. What followed it, indeed, namely his resurrection, is the grand demonstration, that he was the object of the divine approbation; but it is so, because he was put to death as an impostor and blasphemer, and was not at all necessary, independently of these charges against him, to vindicate his claim to the character of a messenger from God. The proof was so complete before his last sufferings, that those who rejected him were without excuse, as we learn from his own words: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."‡

Once more, They tell us that he died to give us the assurance of eternal life, that we might be led to faith and obedience, through which we obtain the remission of sin. At first sight, it seems strange and far from the truth, that the painful and ignominious death of an innocent person should avail to persuade us, that a recompence is prepared in a future state for those who lead a holy life upon earth. Appearances are directly in the face of such an expectation. Aware of this difficulty, Socinus said that this hope, which exerts so happy an influence upon us, is not properly the effect of the death, but of the resurrection of Christ, and is ascribed to his death, because it necessarily preceded his resurrection. But if this were the truth, the Scripture would have made mention of his resurrection, or rather of his ascension to heaven, and his sitting at the right hand of God, when it speaks of the remission of sin, and not of his death and sufferings, at least not so often, and in such significant terms. The frequent, and almost constant, conjunction of his "blood" with remission, indicates that the latter is not a remote, but the proximate effect of it. To what purpose is this circuitous method? Remission is granted to those only who obey the commandments of God; faith, and the hope of a reward, as Socinus affirms, are motives and excitements to obedience; this faith is generated by the consideration of Christ raised from the dead, and exalted to glory on account of his holiness; but death preceded his resurrection, and therefore remission is fitly said to be obtained by his death. That which is near, or separated by a moderate interval, is not assigned as the cause, but that which is removed to a great distance from the effect; the first step in the process is given as the cause of the result, while it ought to be ascribed to the last step, which goes immediately before it; and this is done not once, but uniformly. Who can believe that the Scripture expresses itself so inaccurately and obscurely? To speak of his death when it means his resurrection, of which his death was not the cause but the antecedent, is just as proper as to speak of night when we mean day. A slight perusal of the sacred writings will convince any man who is not prejudiced, that this is not the true account. He will find that the remission of sin is not attributed to the resurrection and exaltation

\* John xiv. 11.

† Ib. iii. 2.

‡ Ib. xv. 22.

of Christ, or to the effect which these events are calculated to produce upon our minds, but expressly to his death; and that his death, as distinguished from his resurrection and exaltation, is stated to be the procuring cause of our redemption. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."\* Our reconciliation, which implies the pardon of sin, was effected by his death, and not by the life which he now leads in heaven.

In a word, they tell us that Christ died in order to obtain the power of forgiving sin. But to this assertion we oppose the fact, that he possessed this power before his death; and it is absurd to suppose him to have died for the purpose of acquiring what was already his own. He repeatedly said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." It is observable that, on one occasion, he used these words, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins;"† as if he had meant to provide for the refutation of those who affirm that this power was subsequent to his ascension. He had power to forgive sins while he was on earth, in his state of humiliation; and that it does not signify, as some pretend, simply the power of healing diseases, will appear on consulting the passage, where there is a clear distinction between the pardon and the cure of the paralytic; the one having taken place before the other, and the cure being expressly declared to be the sign and confirmation of the pardon.

This view of the death of Christ, as the means of obtaining the power of forgiving sin, leads me to take notice of another theory, which has been called the middle scheme, because it admits more than the Socinian, and less than the Catholic system. This statement, however, is not perfectly accurate; because Socinus himself, and his immediate followers, who allowed to Jesus Christ supreme authority over men, held in substance the doctrine which has been supposed to be peculiar to the scheme now to be considered.

The middle scheme agrees with the Socinian in rejecting the atonement, but it accords thus far with the Catholic, that it maintains the intervention or mediation of Christ in a qualified sense, as necessary, or at least as appointed, for the restoration of the guilty to the favour of God. It proceeds upon this principle, that God, who is infinitely merciful, may pardon the transgressions of his creatures freely, and might have pardoned them upon repentance, but that it appeared expedient to his wisdom, and conducive to the interests of his moral government, to exercise his mercy to them, not immediately, but through the interposition of another person. This friendly office was performed by Jesus Christ, whom the abettors of this system do not consider as the eternal and consubstantial Son of God, but as the first and most glorious of created beings, by whom the world was made. Pitying our fallen race, he generously engaged to assume our nature, to submit to poverty and persecution, and to suffer crucifixion, that he might acquire the right and power to carry into effect his benevolent design. His services were highly acceptable to God; and in consideration of them, there has been granted to him, upon his intercession, a kingdom or government over men, authorising him to bestow pardon and eternal life upon those who repent and obey. In confirmation of their scheme, they appeal to certain cases mentioned in Scripture, as being analogous, and as evincing its conformity to the manner in which the Divine administration is conducted; to cases in which the sins of others were pardoned at the request of good men, and from respect to their virtues. Thus, great privileges were conferred upon the Israelites, to reward the piety and obedience of Abraham; the idolatry of the people in the wilderness was pardoned when Moses interceded for them; and God heard the prayer of Job for his three friends, against whom his anger was kindled, because they had not spoken of him the thing that was right.

\* Rom. v. 10.

† Matt. ix. 6.



As this system admits a Mediator, although it confines his duty to intercession founded on his previous sufferings, it enables its advocates to make a plausible use of the language of Scripture, and to say with truth, according to their limited views, that we are saved by the blood of Christ, that we are forgiven for his sake, that we are redeemed to God by the death of his Son. It seems also to guard the honour of the Divine government amidst the exercise of mercy, by not treating the sins of men as light and venial, and pardoning only from respect to the merits of a being of a higher order, through whom their repentance is accepted. It will occur, however, to your minds, that the Scriptural phrases concerning the death of Christ must be interpreted in a low sense, that they may be brought to accord with the scheme now under consideration. We are saved by the death of Christ, not as an atonement, for this idea is expressly excluded; but as a preliminary step to our salvation, or as the appointed means of obtaining the power to save us, or rather the power to prescribe the terms of our salvation. If it be said that this power was merited by his sufferings, and, consequently, that they are in truth the primary cause of salvation, we remark that, after all, no more is ascribed to them than might be ascribed to the sufferings of a mere man, on whose account some favour should be conferred upon his family and friends. He has received wounds or lost his life in the service of his country, and his country testifies its gratitude by rewarding those who are related to him. All the arguments drawn from the terms in which the death of Christ is spoken of, to prove its propitiatory nature against the Socinians, bear with equal force against the scheme of intercession. It is true, according to both systems, that he did not die as our Surety, and bear our sins in his own body on the tree. This scheme, in short, is an expedient which has been devised, not to interpret Scripture according to the genuine sense, but to explain it away; to evade, on the one hand, the obnoxious idea of atonement, and to seem, on the other hand, to attribute to our Saviour's death some powerful efficacy in our redemption from sin. It is liable to the objection against the Socinian system, that it does not satisfactorily account for the sufferings of an innocent person, as on all hands he is acknowledged to have been. It may display the goodness of God, but it reflects upon his justice, with which it is impossible to reconcile the sufferings which Christ underwent by Divine appointment, although he was free from personal or imputed guilt. In short, although it has been called a beautiful theory, it will not appear in this light to the man who thinks, and thinks justly, that the beauty of a moral system depends upon its truth; and to a person who has studied and understood his Bible, it will not have even the merit of speciousness, because, before it could impose upon him for a moment, he must have forgotten all that he had read.

I have said that it is an objection against this and the Socinian system, that they do not satisfactorily account for the death of an innocent person. That our Saviour was without sin, we may assume as an incontrovertible fact, upon the testimony of Scripture; and we reject with abhorrence the insinuation of modern Unitarians, who have dared to insinuate that, although his public life was blameless, he might not be exempt in private from the imperfections incident to humanity. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."\* According to all our ideas of justice, an innocent person has a right to live in peace under the protection of the laws, and we should exclaim against the government which should molest him, as oppressive and tyrannical. Yet we are not surprised when such a person is persecuted by men, because we know by experience what are the fatal effects of calumny and envy, and how often power is abused from caprice, and ignorance, and passion. But, in heaven we look for a pure administration, and it is a principle of reason and religion,

\* 1 Pet. ii. 22.

that the righteous are acceptable to the Ruler of the world, and are the objects of his peculiar care. The sufferings of our Lord did not originate solely from men; the agency of God was concerned in them, and they all, indeed, befel him either by his immediate interposition, or by his appointment and permission: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief."† Some tell us that, in virtue of his sovereignty and supreme dominion, God may subject his creatures to sufferings without a cause; that he is not bound to give an account of his proceedings to us; that, if an angel in heaven, or the holiest man upon earth, were severely afflicted, it would be sufficient to say, that such is his will. Were this doctrine admitted, our antagonists could explain the mystery of the cross without any difficulty. But those who hold it, have forgotten that the Lord of the universe is not a despot, but a righteous and beneficent Governor; they take a partial view of his character, and sink all his other perfections in that of his power. They have forgotten, too, that he has prescribed a law to himself, from which he will never deviate; a law expressly declaring that he will render to every man according to his deeds. Hence we conclude, with the utmost certainty, that when any being suffers there is a just cause. We are at no loss to account for the sufferings of men, whatever are their attainments in piety and virtue, knowing, as we do, that each of them is a sinner; but what reason shall we assign for the sufferings of Him, who was proclaimed by a voice from heaven to be the Son of God, in whom he was well pleased? Here both the systems which we have reviewed entirely fail. They give no explanation in which a well instructed mind can acquiesce. To say that Christ was subjected to sufferings for the benevolent purpose of conferring important benefits upon mankind, is to give the highest sanction to the principle, which is so strongly reprobated in the Scriptures, that evil may be done that good may come. To say that, although his sufferings were great, he has been amply rewarded for them, is to set up the plea, that a person may be treated unjustly in the mean time, provided that justice shall be done to him at last, and to vindicate any arbitrary exercise of power, if the victim of it is not an ultimate loser. Such a procedure would be condemned in a human governor, and is not to be attributed to Him who is the archetype of justice to kings and princes.

You have heard the reasons which are assigned for the death of Christ, by those who deny that it was an atonement for sin. If they have proved unsatisfactory, the doctrine of the catholic church remains unshaken; and it is a presumption in its favour, that all the attempts to substitute something better in its place have failed of success. Before, however, we are authorised to pronounce it to be true, we must ascertain that it is not only preferable to other views of the subject, but that it is agreeable to Scripture, from which only the real design of the death of Christ can be learned. It is not our business to contrive a variety of hypotheses, and try which of them is most suitable, but to inquire what our Saviour himself and his disciples have said upon this important subject.

I begin by observing, That the idea of atonement has prevailed among all nations and in every age of the world, and that, accordingly, sacrifices have been offered with the view of propitiating the Deity. From what source the idea and the practice were derived, is a question about which learned men have been divided in sentiment. Some have maintained that sacrifices were an invention of men, who hoped, by the offering of something valuable, to gain the favour of the Being whom they worshipped, as we seek to conciliate the good will of our superiors by gifts; and others contend that they originated in the command of God to our first parents after the fall. Without en

\* Is. liii. 10.



gaging in this controversy at present, I simply remark upon the improbability that a thought, apparently so extravagant, should have ever occurred to the human mind by its own suggestion, as that the wrath of Heaven would be appeased by the slaughter of unoffending animals. Whatever gave rise to this service, it is certain that such sacrifices held an important place in the religion of the heathens, and continue to be offered in one form or another, by idolatrous nations. Nay, in some cases, a nobler sacrifice was deemed necessary; a human victim was dragged to the altar; and the guilty hoped to wash away their own sins with the blood of one of their brethren. These things are mentioned to show, that a sense of guilt has been universally felt, accompanied with the fear of punishment, and that a persuasion has obtained, that there was no possibility of escaping with impunity, except by the suffering of another in the room of the transgressors. They are a proof that notwithstanding the loud exclamations against the atonement of Christ, as an impeachment of both the goodness and the justice of God, the human mind has with great uniformity, approved of the idea of substitution, and has found in it the best resource against the terrors of conscience.

But this statement has been controverted, and it has been confidently affirmed, that, from a review of the religions of all nations, ancient and modern, they appear to be utterly destitute of any thing like a doctrine of proper atonement; that a general belief has prevailed of the benevolence of the Deity; and that nothing has been deemed necessary to conciliate his favour but repentance and the practice of virtue. The power of prejudice is great. It hides from the mind the plainest truths, and leads it to draw the most illogical conclusions; it reconciles it to palpable absurdities, and renders it impenetrable to the most cogent arguments. But there are some cases in which the utmost stretch of charity cannot admit the power of prejudice as an apology. It is impossible to believe, that a man of learning and good sense has been so blinded by its influence, as to mistake the whole history of mankind upon a particular point, and not to see what, to every other person, presents itself with the brightness of a sun-beam. Either Dr. Priestley, who has made the strange assertion which I am now considering, had never read the history of the various religions of the human race, and in this case was guilty of presumption and dishonesty in pronouncing positively concerning their tenets; or, he has published to the world, with a view to support his own system, what he must have known to be utterly false. It would disgrace a school-boy to say, that the heathens knew nothing of expiatory sacrifices. Dr. Magee has refuted his assertion by an induction of particulars, which show that it is destitute of the slightest foundation. He has proved, that "a great part of the religion of the Pagan nations consisted in rites of deprecation; that fear of the Divine displeasure seems to have been the leading feature in their religious impressions; and that, in the diversity, the costliness, and the cruelty of their sacrifices, they sought to appease gods, to whose wrath they felt themselves exposed, from a consciousness of sin, unrelieved by any information respecting the means of escaping its effects.\* Hence the practice of human sacrifices among, not only the Phenicians, the Persians, the Egyptians, and the Carthaginians, but also the learned Greeks, and the civilized Romans; and hence the doctrine of the Druids, as related by Cæsar in his Commentaries, that, unless the life of men were given for the life of men, the immortal gods would not be appeased.† The gods are often represented as angry, and the idea of propitiating them is expressed by a variety of terms. To turn away the wrath of another, was signified among the Greeks by the verbs *ἰλασθαι*, *ἱκενέειν*, *καταλασθαι*, *ἀποκαταλασθαι*, and among the Latins, by the words *placare*,

\* Magee on Atonement, Vol. i. No. 5.

† De Bello Gall. lib. vi.

*pacare, conciliare, reconciliare, and propitiare.* The act and the effect were called by a single word in both languages; in the one *ἱλασμος*, and in the other *placamen*.

I observe again, that prior to the coming of Christ, sacrifices were offered, not only of thanksgiving, but of atonement, by the worshippers of the true God, in obedience to his command. Such appears to have been the sacrifice of Abel, because it consisted of the firstlings of his flock; and that he had authority for what he did, we infer from the words of the apostle, who says, that he offered by faith,\* which pre-supposes a Divine revelation. This single passage, independently of other considerations, might decide the question respecting the origin of sacrifices. Such are the sacrifices of Job for his sons, lest they should have sinned during the days of feasting; and for his friends, who had sinned in their speeches, and were directed by God himself to adopt this method of averting his anger. When the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, a law was given to them, enjoining sacrifices, appointing a particular family to the priesthood, ordering an altar to be built, and specifying the animals to be used, and the time and manner of offering them. When any of them had transgressed, a sacrifice was prescribed, upon offering which his sin was pardoned, and the penalty was remitted. There were sacrifices also for the whole congregation, in the morning and evening of every day, and on the anniversary of expiation, when the high priest officiated, and entered into the holy place with the blood of the victim, which he sprinkled before the mercy-seat, signifying that it was only through an atonement that God would continue to be gracious to the people. In a word, the whole system proclaimed and illustrated this truth, that “without the shedding of blood, there was no remission of sins.”† No hope was given to the Israelites of the protection and blessing of the Almighty, unless they were purified by sacrifices. If it be said, that the death of animals without reason, could not satisfy Divine justice for the sins of men, we grant, that although they freed the offerer from ceremonial, they could not free him from moral guilt; but hence we infer, that the sacrifices of the law were shadows and figures of a nobler oblation, by which eternal redemption has been obtained.

We should have thought it so clear, that sacrifices were enjoined by the ancient law, and were of a propitiatory nature, that no person would have ventured to dispute it; but it has been asserted, that the Jews had no notion of expiatory sacrifices; or that, if they had any such notion, it was derived from the heathens, contrary to the common opinion, that the heathens derived the notion from them. Nothing is more plainly taught in the Old and the New Testament, than that sacrifices were piacular. The idea is unavoidably suggested by the language of the law, and by the nature of the rites which it prescribed; and it is still retained by the Jews, although they are aware of the argument drawn from thence for the true and proper sacrifice of Christ, and would for this reason have been strongly tempted to renounce it. It is the doctrine of the modern Jews, that the mercy of God accepted the sacrifice of the animal in the room of the offerer, and appointed that in offering it, he should lay his hands upon it, to remind him that the victim was received as his vicarious substitute. In order to prove that the ancient sacrifices were not of an expiatory nature, it is alleged, that they were required in cases where no guilt could be supposed. In the cases of the high priest, the ruler, private individuals, and the whole congregation, a sacrifice was enjoined, when they had sinned through ignorance; and ignorance, it is insinuated, must have exempted them from criminality. Ignorance, however, may not signify the absolute want of knowledge, but inattention and inconsiderateness, which, being itself culpable,

\* Heb. xi. 4.

† Ib. ix. 22.



would not excuse the conduct to which it gave rise; or, if they were really ignorant, they were still to be blamed, because it was their duty to have made themselves thoroughly acquainted with the law which God had given them, and to have kept it constantly in mind. The truth seems to be, that the sins spoken of did not proceed *ex ignorantia juris*, but from want of reflection, from the sudden assaults of temptation, and the violence of passion; and they are opposed to presumptuous sins, sins committed with a high hand, that is, deliberately, against knowledge, and the present conviction of the mind. The former are called sins as well as the latter; but this difference is made between them, that those were expiated by a sacrifice, whereas for these no atonement was provided. "If a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity. And he shall bring a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass-offering, unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his ignorance wherein he erred and wist it not, and it shall be forgiven him."\* Again, sacrifices were required from those who had been cured of leprosy, and from women after child-bearing, and, in neither case, it has been said, can sin be supposed. It is the observation of a Jewish writer,† that "without committing sin, no person is ever exposed to suffering; that it is a principle with the Jewish doctors, that there is no pain without crime; and that for this reason, she who had endured the pains of child-birth, was required to offer a piacular sacrifice." With regard to the leper, it has been remarked by the same person, that "a sin-offering was enjoined, because the whole Mosaic law being founded on this principle, that whatever befalls any human creature, is the result of Providential appointment, the leper must consider his malady as a judicial infliction for some transgression."‡ And certainly the loathsome disease of his body was an emblem of the natural pollution of the soul, and reminded him how necessary it was to seek the favour of that Being who had smitten him once, and might smite him again. But, although a case had occurred, in which we could not discover any vestige of guilt, manifest or implied, it would not, in the judgment of any reasonable man, furnish an objection against the general import of the legal institutions, which so clearly teach, that an atonement is necessary to avert the anger of God.

I observe farther, That the Scriptures affirm, in the most express terms, that the death of Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice. They use the same language in speaking of that event, which is used concerning the piacular services of the law. He is called a priest, and the work of a priest is assigned to him. "Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore, it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer."§ It is said, that "he gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour;"|| and the same thing is asserted in many other passages. It is affirmed, that "he died for our sins according to the Scriptures;"¶ that "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree;"\*\* that "he is the propitiation for our sins;"†† that "he was made a sin-offering for us;"‡‡ that "by his death we are reconciled to God;"§§ that he has redeemed us to God by his blood."||| This is the general strain of the New Testament, and I am not aware of a single expression which has a different meaning. One should think, that language so express, and occurring in so many places, would be sufficient to settle the question, whether the death of Christ was of an expiatory nature, and that no man who feels any reverence for the word of God, and submits to it

\* Lev. v. 17, 18.

§ Heb. viii. 3.

\*\* 1 Pet. ii. 24.

§§ Rom. v. 10.

† Abarbanel.

|| Eph. v. 2.

†† 1 John ii. 2.

||| Rev. v. 9.

‡ See Magee, vol. i. Note 33

¶ 1 Cor. xv. 3.

‡‡ 2 Cor. v. 21.

as the rule of his faith, would venture to controvert this position, or allow a doubt to remain in his mind. But some persons are not so easily satisfied. They have conceived a prejudice against the doctrine, and will not be convinced by any evidence. Hence they have recourse to the same expedient, by which they endeavour to set aside the proofs of the divinity of Christ, namely, the pretence that the words are not to be understood according to their usual import. They cannot deny that he is called a priest, and his death a sacrifice; but they allege that the literal sense must be rejected, for no reason which I can discover, except that it is at variance with their system. Christ, they say, was a metaphorical priest; his death was a metaphorical sacrifice; and what follows, but that he has obtained for us a metaphorical redemption, that is, no redemption at all?

As the Scriptures were given to instruct us in religion, it may be presumed that they are written in language which all may understand. To suppose that the style is highly figurative even in the didactic parts, that plain truths are wrapt up in metaphors, that the real is often different from the apparent sense, is to throw a most injurious reflection upon the word of God, and would justify the church of Rome in withholding it from the common people as a book liable to be abused by them. No person who has read the Old Testament, can be ignorant what is meant by a sacrifice. He understands it to have been a victim slain and offered upon the altar, in order to avert the anger and procure the favour of God. When he finds that, in the New Testament, the death of Christ is called a sacrifice, and considers that both parts of revelation proceeded from the same Author, he is necessarily led to believe that the word retains its ancient sense, and that Christ died in our room to reconcile us to God. We account him a blundering writer, who uses the same word upon the same occasion in different senses; and we call him an unfair writer, who, by changing the meaning without warning, seeks to impose upon his readers. To tell us that we ought to beware of being misled by the sound of words, and that, in the passages which speak of the death of Christ as a propitiatory oblation, nothing is intended but an allusion to the sacrifices of the law, is to tell us that we may seek truth where we please, but we shall not find it in the Scriptures.

If a person is honestly inquiring after truth, he will have recourse to no shifts—no far-fetched and overstrained methods of establishing a particular point. There will be no prejudices admitted in favour of one opinion, and against another; there will be no reluctance to receive evidence, on whatever side it present itself; there will be a cautious and diligent use of all the means, by which a correct view of the subject is most likely to be obtained. Truth alone being his object, there will be no temptation to step out of the way which leads to it. When the question regards the sense of a particular author, he will proceed according to the plan pursued on all such occasions, and understand the terms in their common acceptance, unless it clearly appear that the author has designedly deviated from the established usage. He will not attempt to make him express sentiments different from those which he seems to express, if he is writing historically or didactically, without assigning a reason sufficient to satisfy any competent judge. If we see a person taking a different method, wresting words from their obvious import, talking of metaphors when the literal sense is perfectly intelligible and spontaneously presents itself to the mind, trying to find out, not what they naturally signify, but what they may be made to signify by the dexterity of bold and unprincipled criticism, and converting the text into an enigma, the recondite meaning of which can be discovered only by conjecture and not by any rational rules of interpretation, we have ground to suspect that he is not honest, and that his aim is, not to come at the truth, but to establish a doctrine of his own. Such is



the procedure of Socinians, with respect to the atonement and the divinity of Christ. It is itself sufficient to put every man upon his guard, and betrays a conviction, on their part, that the Scriptures, as we have them, and their system, cannot stand together. Socinianism requires a new Bible, or, what amounts to the same thing, an improved version; that is, a corrupted text, and an equally corrupt interpretation.

## LECTURE LVIII.

### ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

The Correspondence between the atoning Sacrifices of the Levitical Law and the Death of Christ, traced and proved—Christ a Substitute, and his Death an Atonement—Notice of Objections to the Doctrine.

WE have ground for believing that the death of Christ was an atonement for sin, in the language of Scripture, which, being borrowed from the sacrificial rites of the law, is applied to that event in such a manner, as to leave no doubt that his death was considered by the sacred writers as having the same nature, and the same design, with the ancient oblations. But, in order more fully to establish the doctrine, let us take a closer view of the legal sacrifices, and observe how exact is the correspondence between them and the death of Christ in every thing essential. If we find that it has all the characters of a true and proper sacrifice for sin, we cannot hesitate to view it in this light, and to regard it as the procuring cause of pardon and eternal life.

The first point of resemblance is found in the substitution of the sacrifice. It was put in the place of the person who offered it, and was called an offering for his sin, or for his soul. It was not a free gift, a token of gratitude, or a tribute paid by a subject to his sovereign, but a vicarious oblation, which was slain to signify the death which he deserved, and to save him from personally undergoing the penalty. As this notion of a sacrifice is obviously taught by the law, so it was adopted by the Jews and by the Gentiles, who both considered the victim as given for them, as occupying their place. This was signified by the act of laying his hands upon the head of the victim, by which the offerer transferred his guilt from himself to the devoted animal, that it might be punished in his stead. Jesus Christ was substituted in the room of sinners; and hence he is called *εγγυς*, “the surety of a better covenant.”\* A surety is one who gives security for another, that the other will fulfil his engagements, or, in the case of failure, that he will fulfil them for him. Some say that he was surety to us for God, having engaged that God would perform his promises; or surety for us to God, having engaged to him that we should perform the condition of the covenant. Both ideas are inadmissible, and the true meaning is explained by the apostle in another place, when he says, that Christ was “the Mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”† He was a surety who undertook to die for those whom he represented.

The substitution is evident from those passages in which he is said to have died *for us*, *ὕπερ ἡμῶν*. It is acknowledged that the preposition *ὕπερ* sometimes signifies merely *on account of*, or *with a view to the advantage of*; but it

\* Heb. vii. 22.

† Ib. ix. 15.

does not follow that, in reference to the death of Christ, it imports only that he died for our good, to confirm his doctrine, and to set us an example. It is beyond doubt that it also signifies in *the room of*, and bears this sense when it occurs in connexion with the verb ἀποθνήσκω, both in the Scriptures and in the classics. “The Socinians,” says Raphelius, “will not find one Greek writer to support a different interpretation.”\* In this sense it occurs repeatedly in the writings of Xenophon: Ἡ καὶ θέλεις ἀνὶ ὑπὲρ τούτου ἀποθάνειν;† “would you be willing to die for this boy?” that is, as is evident from the context, “Will you die in his stead? save his life by parting with your own?” Ἀντίλοχος τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπεράποθανον—‡ “Antiochus dying for his father” obtained such glory, that he alone among the Greeks was called Φιλοπάταρ. The preposition retains the same sense in the New Testament. When Caiaphas, the high priest, said, that it was expedient ἵνα ἓς ἀνθρώπος ἀποθάνῃ ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ, καὶ μὴ ὅλον τὸ ἔθνος ἀπολητῇ, he manifestly signified that our Lord should be put to death as a victim for the Jews, that by his death they might be saved from the vengeance of the Romans. He was to be like the περιήματα and περικαθαρέματα of the Greeks, men who were taken from the multitude and slain, that the anger of the gods might be appeased. “Scarcely—ὑπὲρ δικαίου,—for a righteous man will one die, but for a good man,—ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ—some would even dare to die.”§ Persons might be found to lay down their lives for such a man. The apostle is unquestionably speaking of a case of substitution, of the voluntary sacrifice of one life for another. The preposition, therefore, must, by all the laws of criticism, have the same import, in the words which immediately follow:—“But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,—ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀπέθανε.”||

The same inference may be drawn from the use of the preposition ἀντί, which conveys the idea of commutation and substitution. The law says, σφάλλῃς ἀντί σφάλλου, ὁδὸς ἀντί ὁδοῦ, requiring that the man who had put out the eye or the tooth of another, should lose one of his own. To render κακὸν ἀντί κακοῦ, is to do any injury to our neighbour, because he has done an injury to us. In these cases, the general idea is that of commutation. The preposition also denotes substitution and succession, or coming in the room of another. Thus, Archelaus reigned over Judea,—ἀντί Ἡρώδου τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ—“in the room of Herod his father.”¶ And in what other sense but this of substitution can we understand it in the following words? “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”—δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν ἑωυτοῦ λύτρον ἀντί πολλῶν.\*\* The preposition ascertains the action to be vicarious, to be an action performed by one person, not only for the benefit, but in the room of another, as a benevolent man would lay down the price demanded for the liberty of a captive, which the captive himself was unable to pay. The life of sinners was forfeited, and it was redeemed by the life of the Saviour. The word λύτρον signifies a price of any kind, but is limited to the sense of a ransom by the occasion, being λύτρον ἀντί πολλῶν, for the deliverance of many. There is a compound noun, ἀντιλύτρον, which is used by Paul, when he says, that Christ gave himself a “ransom for all, to be testified in due time;”†† intimating, in the most intelligible manner, that his death was not merely the means, but the price of our redemption, and, consequently, that his sufferings were vicarious.

When we affirm the substitution of Christ, we suppose that our guilt was legally transferred to him, so that he was made answerable for it; and, in this respect, there is a resemblance between him and the ancient sacrifices. They were called sin-offerings, and simply ἁμαρτία, *sin*,—the same term being em-

\* Raphelii Annot. tom. ii. p. 253, 254.

† De Cyri Exped.

‡ De Venat.

§ Rom. v. 7. || Ib. 8. ¶ Matt. ii. 22.

\*\* Ib. xx. 28.

†† 1 Tim. ii. 6.



ployed to denote the transgression and the oblation for it, because there was a translation of the one to the other, or the latter was considered as bearing the former. This translation was represented by a significant rite. When the priest, the ruler, or any one of the common people, brought for a sin-offering a bullock, a goat, or a kid, or a lamb, each was commanded to lay his hand upon its head; and the meaning of the rite is evident from what was done on the great day of atonement. Two goats were then presented, of which the one was to be slain and offered for a sin-offering; but the other was to be sent by the hand of a fit person into the wilderness, in order to represent the removal of guilt as the effect of the sacrifice. That the design might be understood, and might make a proper impression upon the spectators, "Aaron," says the law, "shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness."\* There seems to be an allusion to this rite, and certainly the same thing is expressed by the prophet, when he says, "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."† They were laid upon him as the sins of the Israelites were laid upon the scape-goat. To the same purpose are the words of the Apostle, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."‡ I add the testimony of Peter: "Who his own self bare our sins in his body on the tree: by whose stripes ye were healed."§ The sins which he bore on the cross were not his own, but ours; and "his bearing them" implies, that they had been laid upon him as a burden under which we were sinking into perdition, and from which he was graciously pleased to relieve us. It is an obvious inference from these passages, that there was a transference of the sins of men to our Saviour, as the sins of the Israelite were transferred to the animal which he brought to the altar. Christ having voluntarily engaged to give satisfaction to the Divine justice for us, they were reckoned to him, as a debt is reckoned to a surety when the debtor himself is insolvent, and the creditor looks to the surety for payment. God dealt with him as if the sins had been his own; he inflicted punishment upon him as if he had been the offender. This is what we mean by saying that our sins were imputed to him; he came under an obligation to bear the penalty. They were only imputed to him, but not accounted really his own. This was impossible; for God, who always judges according to truth, would not charge one person with having committed the sins of another. Such a charge would be false, and never was, nor never will be, made. We cannot, therefore, read without disgust and detestation the language in which some high-flyers have indulged,—men who carried every thing to excess, and exposed important doctrines to reproach, by the unguarded and presumptuous manner in which they expressed them; not hesitating to call our blessed Lord a sinner, and the greatest of sinners; and to maintain that, during his last sufferings, he was separated from God and disowned by him, and was odious and abominable in his sight. These are not the words of truth and soberness, but the ravings of impiety or insanity. Such men did not understand the translation of guilt, which merely implies an obligation to punishment, but no moral taint, and was so far from rendering our Lord an object of the displeasure of his Father, that he never was the object of higher approbation than when he was expiring on the cross. The voluntary susception of our guilt, while in himself he was

\* Lev. xvi. 21, 22.

† Is. liii. 6.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 21.

§ 1 Peter ii. 24.

perfectly pure, could not for one moment change the sentiment of entire complacency with which his heavenly Father had always regarded him. Without sin, he was a sin-offering, bearing the iniquities of those whom he had undertaken to redeem. He owed nothing to justice for himself, but he owed much as the surety of men. His death was accompanied with such circumstances as showed that it was a penal act; for, besides its shame and its torments, it was that kind of death which the law had pronounced to be accursed; and the preternatural darkness at his crucifixion, was a visible symbol of the frown of the invisible Creator.

The animal which was substituted in the room of the offending Israelite, and over which he had confessed his sin, was slain, and laid upon the altar. Life was given for life; the life of the animal, which God was pleased to accept, instead of the life of the man. "The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it unto you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."\* That Jesus Christ died, is a fact about which there is no dispute; but, with respect to the design of his death, we have seen that his professed followers are far from being agreed. It is granted that he died for our good, that he submitted to crucifixion to attest his doctrine, and give us an example; but that his death was a sacrifice of atonement, some men confidently deny. Upon their hypothesis, there was no material difference between his death and that of many other holy men, who laid down their lives for the truth, and at the same time, were admirable patterns of faith, and patience, and hope. We assert, that he died as the substitute of the guilty; that death was a punishment inflicted upon him for our sins, which were the impulsive cause of his sufferings, and, in this sense, he was made a curse for us; and that the great design was, to give satisfaction to Divine justice. This view is founded upon the passages formerly quoted to prove his substitution, passages which assert, that "he gave himself for us;" that "he was made sin," or a sin-offering, "for us;" that "he died for all;" that "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" that "he suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." In a case where the defence of a particular system was not concerned, it would be acknowledged to be contrary to the laws of sound interpretation to understand, by such expressions, merely that the death of Christ has been productive of some benefit to mankind. I should wish to know, from those who wrest them from their obvious sense—the sense which they have suggested to all men but themselves—in what stronger terms the inspired writers could have expressed themselves, if it had been really their design to inform us that Christ died, not only for our good, but to atone for our sins; and whether the usage of the language, and the prevailing sentiments of those for whose instruction they wrote, would have led them to employ other terms than those which they have actually employed. If their words do not teach that the death of Christ was a true and proper sacrifice for sin, we must say that this is an idea which human language is incapable of communicating. Is it possible to be more explicit than Peter is, when he affirms, that Christ suffered for sin, or as a sin-offering, the just for the unjust? Surely every man must see, who has not wilfully shut his eyes, that the just One suffered in the room of the unjust; suffered that they might not suffer; that his death was vicarious, and he submitted to it that he might bring us to God, or effect a reconciliation between us and our offended Creator. There is no perceptible difference between his death and the legal sacrifices but this—that, in the one case, it was an animal without reason which was slain, and in the other, it was a man, the Son of the living God, who was the victim. His death was called a sacrifice,

\* Lev. xvii. 11.



without the slightest hint of a metaphor. "He offered himself," as the Levitical priest offered the goats, and lambs, and bullocks, which were required by the law, "he offered himself without spot to God;" "he appeared in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;"\* to accomplish at once what was typified by the legal oblations. He was a "Lamb slain;" the "Lamb of God, which took away the sins of the world."†

Attempts have been made to neutralize the evidence furnished by these passages in favour of the doctrine of atonement. When Christ is said to have borne our sins, we are told that this does not mean that he bore the punishment of them, but that he bore them away; and that he bore them away by procuring the offer of pardon upon repentance, or by presenting motives fit to turn us from our sins, in consequence of which we are forgiven. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, it is said, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."‡ In order to prove, from this verse, the propitiatory nature of the sufferings of Christ, the two words which express what he has done in reference to our sins,—נשא and כבד, translated *borne* and *carried*,—have been carefully examined, and their import has been ascertained by a comparison of other passages in which they occur. The result is given by Dr. Magee in the forty-second note.§ Both signify, not to bear *away*, but to *bear* or *sustain*, as a person bears a burden, and this is evidently the sense in all cases where sin is spoken of; "the suffering, or being liable to suffer, some infliction on account of sin, which, in the case of the offender himself, would be properly called punishment." "We are told that God *made the iniquities of us all to fall upon him*, who is said to have *borne the iniquities of many*: thus is the *bearing of our iniquities* explained to be the *bearing them laid on as a burden* and though a reference is undoubtedly intended to the laying the iniquities of the Jewish people on the head of the scape-goat, which was done, (as is urged by Socinus, Crellius, Taylor, and other writers who adopt their notions,) that they might be borne, or carried *away*; yet this does not prevent them from being borne *as a burden*. The great object in *bearing our sins*, was certainly to bear them *away*; but the manner in which they were borne, so as to be ultimately borne away by him who died for us, was by his enduring the afflictions and sufferings which were due to them; by his being "numbered with transgressors," treated as if he had been an actual transgressor, and made *answerable for us*, and consequently *wounded for our transgressions* and *smitten for our iniquities*, in such a manner that our *peace was effected* by his chastisement, and we *healed by his bruises*; he *having borne our iniquities*, having suffered that which was the penalty due to them on our part, and *having offered himself a sacrifice for sin* on our account."|| Peter alludes to this passage in Isaiah, when he says, "that Christ—τας ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνέθηκεν ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον,—bore our sins in his own body on the tree."¶ It has been contended, that the verb ἀναφέρω here signifies *to bear away*; but literally it means *to carry up from a lower to a higher place*, and is used to express the act of sacrificing: "Who needeth not daily, like the high priest—ἀναφέρειν θυσίας,—to offer sacrifices for sins."\*\*\* It does not seem to enter in the sense of *bearing away*. In the passage under consideration, if it convey any idea beyond simple bearing, it signifies *to carry up*, and intimates that Christ carried up our sins to the cross, having previously taken them upon him, that he might there bear the punishment of them, as the legal sacrifices were carried up to the altar, and laid upon it, that they might be consumed.

It has been objected to the vicarious nature of the death of Christ, which

\* Heb. ix. 14, 26. † Rev. v. 6, &c. John i. 29. ‡ Is. liii. 4. § Magee on Aton. vol. i. p. 461. ¶ 1 Pet. ii. 24. \*\*\* Heb. vii. 27.

imports that he endured the punishment due to our sins, that he did not actually suffer the punishment to which we were liable, for his sufferings were temporary, whereas eternal death is the doom of transgressors. The objection comes with an ill grace from Socinians, who deny the eternity of future punishment, unless they mean to refute us from our own principles, or to use the *argumentum ad hominem*; but from whatever quarter it comes, it involves a difficulty which may occur to the attentive inquirer. It has been frequently said, that eternity is not a necessary adjunct of the punishment of sin, but arises from the limited capacity of creatures, who could not endure, in a definite time, the full execution of the penalty. I am disposed to call in question the accuracy of this statement, and to believe that it is not from the weakness of the subject that suffering will be perpetual, but because the penalty implies the final forfeiture of happiness; and that, by the constitution of things, the loss incurred is a total and irretrievable loss. Sin separates the creature from the Creator, without the possibility of reunion. Be this as it may, I remark, that, in considering the atonement of Christ, we are not to inquire what was the *quantum* of suffering, in order to ascertain whether it bore an exact proportion to the sufferings which would have fallen to the lot of those whom he died to redeem. Some men have allowed themselves to go into estimates of this kind, and have presumptuously, and, in my opinion, nonsensically maintained, that the sum of suffering was so nicely adjusted between our Saviour and the objects of his love, that, if there had been a single person more to be saved, his sufferings would have been proportionably augmented. They seem to have imagined, that he actually endured all the pain which the millions of the redeemed were doomed to endure throughout the whole of their being.—We should scarcely have expected arithmetical calculations to be introduced into a subject so little connected with them; but human speculations are sometimes pushed to an extravagant and ridiculous length. This comes from understanding our sins to be debts in a literal sense, and the sufferings of Christ to be such a payment as a surety makes in pounds, shillings, pence, and farthings. I remark by the way, that they have gone to the opposite extreme, who have ventured to affirm, that one drop of the blood of Christ would have been sufficient to redeem the world. They might be asked to tell us, why he shed so many drops, and even poured out his soul unto death, and whether they seriously believe that he suffered more than was necessary for the salvation of mankind? To return to the first calculators, they entirely overlook the personal dignity of our Saviour, which must have given an unspeakable value to his sufferings; for had this been taken into the account, they would have seen, that such an accumulation of pain as they imagine was unnecessary. According to their hypothesis, the dignity of his person added nothing to the value of his sufferings, nor did they need to be enhanced by it, as they were equal in degree to the appointed sufferings of his people. We can hardly speak, without presumption, upon a subject so mysterious and awful. His sufferings were great, beyond the power of language to express, or of imagination to conceive; but if we admit that all the acts of his human nature were finite, we cannot consistently say that his sufferings were infinite in degree, and must consequently admit that their transcendent worth was owing to the union of that nature to the divine. He did not, therefore, suffer all the pains and sorrows of sinners, but he suffered what was equivalent. It was the blood of the Son of God which was shed; it was the Lord of glory who was crucified. Hence, although his sufferings were temporary, they satisfied the demands of justice, and were a valid ground upon which God might pardon the sins of believers. It was not necessary that the sacrifice should remain for ever upon the altar, because it was so superior in worth to all former sa-



crifices, so precious in itself, that, in the language of Scripture, God “smelled a savour of rest.”

Perhaps our ideas are not always distinct, when we speak of the death of Christ as a satisfaction for sin. That word, indeed, is used to signify any thing with which the person having a claim is contented, whether he receive the whole that he claims, or only a part of it, or something instead of it. In law, it strictly signifies a payment which may or may not be admitted, according to the pleasure of him to whom it is due; and it takes place when not the very thing is done which he had a right to demand, but something which he is pleased to accept as an equivalent. In the present case, what the law demanded was the death of the transgressors themselves; it was, therefore, a relaxation of the law, to admit another to die for them; and, on this account, the death of Christ was properly a satisfaction to justice; something with which it was content, although not the very thing which it originally required. It is on this ground that sinners were not *ipso facto* set free from guilt and condemnation, but continue under them till they believe. The reason is, that they did not themselves undergo the penalty, but another underwent it in their room; and the Lawgiver had a right to settle the terms of their actual deliverance. We need not, therefore, puzzle ourselves with inquiring how much Christ suffered; for, besides that this is a question which we are not competent to decide, it is enough to know, that he suffered all that was necessary to demonstrate the Divine abhorrence of sin, to maintain the authority of the law, and to exclude the impenitent from the hope of impunity.

The same effect is ascribed to the death of Christ, as to the ancient sacrifices, and both are said to have averted the anger of God, and procured his good will and favour to man. Upon offering the appointed sacrifice, an Israelite was exempted from the penalty incurred by transgression, and was permitted to retain his place in the congregation, and to enjoy his political and ecclesiastical privileges. This expression is frequently subjoined to the precept respecting offerings to be made on particular occasions: “The priest shall make atonement for his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.”\* This is the prayer to be presented on the occasion of offering a heifer when a person had been slain, and the murderer could not be discovered:—“Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel’s charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them.”† If, then, the death of Christ has accomplished the design of sacrifices, we may justly conclude, that it was a sacrifice in the true and proper sense. The blessings which we enjoy by it are, pardon, peace, and the favour of God. “He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”‡ “We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”§ “Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”|| There were some sins for which that law provided no sacrifice, and the transgressor died without mercy: the superior excellence of this sacrifice appears from its unbounded efficacy, there being no sin, however aggravated, which will be not remitted to him who believes. In a word, Christ is said to have made peace by the blood of his

\* Lev. iv. 26, 31, 35. vi. 7. xii. 8, &c. † Deut. xxi. 8. ‡ Rom. iv. 25. v. 1, 2.

§ Ephes. i. 7.

|| Acts. xiii. 38, 39.

cross, to have redeemed us to God with his blood, to have redeemed us from the curse, to have delivered us from the wrath to come, to have made us kings and priests unto God, even our Father. It is plain, from these and many other passages which it is unnecessary to quote, that the removal of guilt, the repeal of the condemnatory sentence, and the hope of eternal life, are attributed to his death as the procuring cause.

The design of sacrifices was to appease the anger of the Deity; Jews and Gentiles agreed in this idea. Jesus Christ is called a "merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people,"\*—*ως το ιλασκειν τας αμαρτιας του λαου*,—literally, *to propitiate the sins of the people*; but the expression is evidently elliptical, and is put for *ως το ιλασκειν θεον περι των αμαρτιαν*, *to propitiate God for the sins of the people*. The design of his death was to make God propitious to men, to avert his anger, and to procure his favour. This is what we mean by making atonement for sin. Such an atonement as consists in the destruction of sin by repentance, and the acquisition of habits of holiness, (and this is the only atonement which Socinus would admit), could not be expressed by *ιλασκομαι*, or its derivative *ιλασμος*. It is well known that *ιλασμος* signifies an atonement, something done or suffered to reconcile an offended person; and it is repeatedly applied to our Saviour, obviously for the purpose of informing us what was the design and the effect of his death. "He is—*ιλασμος*—the *propitiation* for our sins."† "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be—*ιλασμον*—a *propitiation* for our sins."‡ Paul makes use of a different word, but of the same derivation,—"*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation—ιλαστην*."§ It is the word employed by the Seventy, to express the covering of the ark of the covenant, which was called the mercy-seat; and they have joined with it the word *επιθεμα*. '*ιλαστην επιθεμα*, is the *propitiatory covering*.|| Hence, some read the passage, "*Whom God hath set forth a mercy-seat*." 'Christ, say the Unitarians, 'is what the mercy-seat was under the former dispensation. In him God shows himself merciful. Here he takes his stand, and declares his gracious purposes.' Their meaning is, that Christ is the messenger of Divine mercy, the medium of Divine communication; and thus they get rid of the idea of atonement. Grotius supposes *ιλαστην* to be a noun, and says, that all words of this termination import an efficient power, and are improperly understood as merely declarative, and, consequently, that *ιλαστην* here signifies, that Christ has made God propitious. Others, regarding it as an adjective, think that a noun is understood, either *ιερον* or *θυμα*, and that the meaning is, God hath set him forth as a propitiatory sacrifice; *ιλαστης* the adjective signifying *having the force or power to propitiate or expiate*. And, that this is the true sense of the word, is plain from two considerations: First, The Apostle calls him *ιλαστην*, "*a propitiation through faith in his blood*," intimating, that it was the effusion of his blood which propitiated, as under the law it was the blood of the devoted animal which made an atonement. Secondly, Something more than a declaration of mercy must be intended, because the design of setting him forth as a propitiation was, "*to declare the justice of God in the remission of sin, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus*."¶ We can understand how Divine justice was displayed, if Christ died for sin, or suffered the punishment of it; but there is nothing like justice in a simple declaration of mercy.

The atoning nature of the death of Christ is signified, when its effect is said to be "*our reconciliation to God*," and is expressed by the verbs *καταλυσεν* and *αποκαταλυσαν*, and by the noun *καταλλαγη*. "*When we were enemies—*

\* Heb. ii. 17.

† 1 John ii. 2.

‡ Ib. iv. 10.

§ Rom. iii. 25.

|| Exod. xxv. 17.

¶ Rom. iii. 26.



καταλλάξαι, — *we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.*”\* “We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received—*την καταλλάξιν*—*the reconciliation.*”† It is objected, that it is no where said that God was reconciled to us, but that we are reconciled to him; and such a reconciliation does not signify the averting of his anger against us, but the laying aside our enmity against him. We may ask those who advance the objection, whether they believe that God was not offended at the sins of men? If they say that he was not, they give the lie to innumerable passages, in which his abhorrence of sin, and his determination to punish the sinner, are declared; and they virtually maintain, that holiness and justice are not perfections of his nature. If they admit that sin is displeasing to him, and vengeance is proclaimed against the sinner, they must also admit, that not only we are reconciled to God, but he is reconciled to us; that having been once angry, he is now pacified. Whether they will allow that this change was effected by the death of Christ or not, they can neither deny that it does take place, and is owing to some cause, nor object to the idea itself with appearance of reason. He who once threatened to punish another, but has since pardoned him, and now treats him with kindness, has certainly been reconciled to him. If his sentiments towards him were always the same, his appearances of displeasure were a dramatic show, inconsistent with sincerity. The argument that God is not said, in express terms, to have been reconciled to us, is of no weight, while his reconciliation is implied in other phrases; as that he hath made peace by the blood of his cross, and reconciled those who were once alienated, and enemies in their mind by wicked works, and that Christ is a propitiation for sin, or has made God propitious to us, with whom, on account of sin, he was formerly displeased. The objectors have been misled by not attending to the true import of *καταλασσισθαι* and *διαλλαττισθαι*, which is also used in the New Testament. Such words are employed in the classics to signify, the removing of the anger of the gods, and bear the same sense in the sacred writings.—They signify, to return to a state of peace with a person whom we had offended, to pacify him and render him friendly. Thus, when our Lord says in the Gospel of Matthew, if “thy brother hath ought against thee,” has some ground of offence, “go and—*διαλλαγεθι τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου*—be reconciled to thy brother,”‡ nothing can be plainer, than that the offender is not exhorted to lay aside his enmity to his brother, although this is understood; and that the purpose of going to the offended person is, to reconcile him by confession and reparation, to appease his anger, and persuade him to be at peace with the offender. Here then the phrase, be reconciled to another, signifies to reconcile the other to us; and why should not the word have the same meaning, when it is used in reference to God? We are reconciled to him, as we are reconciled to our injured brother; something is done which disposes him to receive us into favour. Now, the cause of the reconciliation which the Scripture assigns is, the death of Christ, and, consequently, his death was a propitiatory sacrifice. The Apostle explains our being saved from wrath, by “our receiving the reconciliation.”§ To receive the reconciliation is to obtain the remission of our sins; but to receive our conversion, which is the sense of Socinians, is a form of speech altogether unprecedented. The two reconciliations of God to sinners and of sinners to God, are mentioned in the fifth chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians. Of the first the apostle says, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”|| Thus, reconciliation consisted in forgiving them, that is, in ceasing to be angry with them, and receiving them into favour; and how it was effected we learn in general from the mention of Christ as a

\* Rom. v. 10.

† Ib. v. 11.

‡ Matt. v. 24.

§ Rom. v. 9, 11.

|| 2 Cor. v. 19

person by whom the world was reconciled, and in particular from the words subjoined for explanation. "For he made him to be sin," or "a sin-offering for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."\* This reconciliation was evidently on the part of God, who, by the mediation of Christ, opened the way for the exercise of his mercy in pardoning the guilty. It cannot mean our personal reconciliation to God, or our conversion, for this follows as a consequence of the former. On the ground of God's reconciliation to us, we are exhorted to be reconciled to him, and the great motive or encouragement is his previous reconciliation. "He hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God."† "Since God has given Christ to be a propitiation for sin, and has sent us to proclaim the joyful tidings, do you accept the offer of peace, and enter into covenant with him.' We are reconciled to God when we are justified by faith.

It is false to affirm, that God is never said to be reconciled to us; and, consequently, this argument against the propitiatory nature of the death of Christ falls to the ground. It is equally false to affirm, that God was reconciled before he sent his Son into the world, and that therefore Christ did not die to reconcile him. We acknowledge that it was because he loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. But this love was merely a benevolent purpose to deliver us by proper means, and proceeded no farther than to provide those means. He had not actually forgiven us, but was willing to forgive us, if a sufficient atonement was made. He appointed Christ to die for transgressors, that he might receive them into favour in perfect consistency with his threatenings against sin, and the righteousness of his administration. He was content—nay he willed—that the grounds of his displeasure against us should be removed; but, till they were removed, he was not actually reconciled; and hence our pardon and restoration are not represented as the immediate effects of his original purpose to save us, but are ascribed to the vicarious sufferings of the Saviour. "The chastisement of our peace," or by which our peace was procured, "was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." God was reconciled when that was done, which made justice cease to demand our punishment.

The general ground on which we maintain the doctrine of atonement is, the necessity arising from the nature and the revealed will of God, that the transgressors of the law should be subjected to the penalty. We think that the transgressors can be allowed to escape only by a gracious dispensation, admitting a surety to suffer in their room. We cannot see how the honour of the Divine character and government could be otherwise maintained. Believing that avenging justice is essential to God, we conclude that free pardon, or pardon upon the simple condition of repentance, was impossible. But, although abstract reasoning from the Divine perfections may be auxiliary to our belief of any particular doctrine, the proper foundation of faith is the express testimony of Scripture; and I have therefore endeavoured to lay before you a part of the evidence which it supplies on this most important subject. The argument drawn from the justice of God in support of this doctrine, was considered when I endeavoured to illustrate his perfections.

I shall close this discussion, by calling your attention to the objections which are advanced against this doctrine.

First, It is objected, that the doctrine of the atonement is repugnant to all our notions of justice; for, what is more manifestly unjust, than that the innocent should suffer for the guilty? But the assumed maxim, that it is con-

\* 2 Cor. v. 21.

† 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.



trary to justice that a person should suffer except for his own sins, is too sweeping, and is not agreeable to the common sentiments of mankind. It is acknowledged that, in certain cases, one man may put himself in the place of another, and bear the consequences of such substitution. We have an example in cases of suretiship, when the surety is compelled to do what the principal has failed to perform. There are even instances in the matter of life and death, of one man engaging to save the life of another by the sacrifice of his own. Here, however, suretiship is extended beyond its due limits, because no man has power to give away his own life, and therefore no government has a right to accept it. But the principle of substitution is recognised and acted upon among men, and cannot consistently be condemned, when adopted as a part of the Divine administration. We cannot reasonably find fault with God for doing what is done by ourselves, is sanctioned by our laws, and is acknowledged by all to be fair and equitable. There are several considerations which show that, in the present case, it was perfectly justifiable. Christ possessed the necessary qualification of freedom from the obligation upon all other men to suffer death; if he had had sins of his own, for which to make satisfaction, he could not have been admitted as a substitute. He was master of his own life as Lord of all, could make a free gift of it, had power to lay it down, and power to take it again. No man could take it from him; he gave it freely, and the law says *Volenti nulla fit injuria*; he is not injured, when that is done to him, to which he has given his deliberate and cordial consent. God, who might have demanded the death of the guilty themselves, being the supreme Lawgiver, was pleased so far to relax the law, as to allow another to die for them. We see that all things concur to make this transaction accordant with justice. Christ might give his life for us; he gave it freely, and his Father accepted it. God certainly knew what was proper to be done, what became his character, what would most effectually uphold the authority and honour of his government; and what man or angel will presume to arraign the dispensation? In truth, the proper question is, whether the Scriptures teach that Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice; and, if they do, objections to the justice of the proceeding are vain and impious, because it is past all doubt, that whatever God does is right.

In the second place, it is objected, that this doctrine represents God as furious and revengeful, delighting in the miseries of his creatures, and contented only with torments and blood. He would not be appeased, and permit sinners to escape, till his Son offered the dreadful sacrifice of himself. This is an unfair, irreverent, and malignant representation of a holy and awful truth of revealed religion. The Scriptures do indeed ascribe wrath, jealousy, and revenge to God, by *anthropopathy*, or the figurative attribution of human sentiments and feelings, and even of human members, to him; but every person is aware, that the design of such forms of speech would be perverted, and great dishonour would be done to him by supposing that there is any thing in his nature analogous to the commotions and infirmities of ours. Far be it from us to conceive so unworthily of Him who is all-perfect. Such terms are employed solely to assist us in forming an idea of the contrariety of sin to his nature and will, of the strong disapprobation with which he regards it, and of his fixed determination to render the recompense of their deeds to the transgressors of his law. He has no pleasure in the misery of his creatures, abstractly considered, as he has assured us with an oath; he is naturally good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. But having given a righteous law to man, he will maintain his authority, by executing the penalty upon those who violate it: being the Ruler of the world, he will not permit the disobedient and rebellious to escape with impunity. When we affirm, that avenging justice is essential to God, we do not mean to represent him as

cruel and unrelenting, but as one who must do what is right, and will abide by his original law, which denounced death upon transgressors. When we affirm, that he would not pardon sin without an atonement, we do not impute to him any want of mercy, but ascribe to him the perfection of justice, which required that compensation should be made for the wrong which he had sustained, and security should be given for the preservation of his rights and prerogatives.

In the third place, It is objected, that the doctrine of the atonement supposes God to be liable to change, to be first angry, and then pacified. But this objection might be made to every system of religion which admits that sin is displeasing to God: for the same change must take place, when a sinner repents. It might be made to prayer, the professed design of which is, to obtain blessings from him, which he would not otherwise have bestowed. The atonement did not make God hate sin less than he did before, or excite feelings of compassion towards us, which did not formerly exist. He loved us before he gave his Son; and sin still is, and ever will be, the object of his utmost aversion. The effect of the atonement was a change of dispensation, which is consistent with immutability of nature. He could now extend mercy to those whom he was always willing to pardon, but could not pardon honourably, till his justice was satisfied. In fact, he demanded an atonement, because he does not change; and, therefore, would not revoke his threatening, nor lay aside his abhorrence of sin. They represent him as mutable, who assert, that he pardons sin without satisfaction to his justice.

In the fourth place, It is objected, that this doctrine supposes a price to have been paid for our redemption, whereas it is represented in the Scriptures as free. This objection does not bear particularly upon the doctrine, as stated and maintained by us, but it is applicable to the Scripture itself, which says, that we are bought with a price, and yet declares, that we are saved by grace. It is true that the blood of Christ was shed as the ransom of our souls; but still, in respect to us, redemption is free, because nothing is given by us in exchange for it, and it is enjoyed by every man who receives it with humility and gratitude. It is farther evident, that our redemption is of grace, although the death of Christ was the indispensable condition of it, because it originated in the free purpose of God, who might have left us in a state of guilt and misery; because, in this scheme, a surety was admitted instead of sinners themselves, whom the law had marked out as the objects of the penalty; because the surety was chosen and appointed by God, on whose part all the advances were made; and because the office of redeeming us was devolved upon a person so high in dignity, and so closely related to God, that his mission will for ever remain a proof of unmerited and ineffable love. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."\*

In the fifth place, It is objected, that to suppose Christ to have died for our sins, is to suppose him to have made an atonement of himself; because, if he is God, he was offended as well as his Father. The objection is founded on our imperfect knowledge of the doctrine of the Trinity; and it is surely absurd to oppose to a truth clearly revealed, arguments drawn from a subject which surpasses our comprehension. Assuming the doctrine of the Trinity, we must pronounce it to be presumptuous to say that a thing was impossible, although Scripture has told us that it was done, solely because we cannot conceive how it was done. If there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead, the union and distinctions of whom we do not understand, shall we venture to say, that one of them could not act economically in the character of Supreme

\* 1 John iv. 10.



Lawgiver and Judge, and another, in a different nature assumed for the purpose, do what was necessary to display his justice, and prepare the way for the exercise of his mercy? There have been many instances of human legislators, who, in a private character, gave satisfaction to their own laws. That such cases can be considered as strictly analogous to the present, I will not say; it is certain, however, that in Scripture our Redeemer is represented, during his sufferings, not as the Lawgiver, but as the subject of the law,—not as the equal of the Father, but as his servant. The difficulty of conceiving this arrangement, is not a reason why we should call in question the fact, that he was made under the law, and fulfilled it by his obedience and death.

In the sixth place, An objection is founded on the sufferings and death of believers; for how could they be subject to these evils, if he fully expiated their guilt? When a debt is paid by a surety, the debtor is completely and instantly released, because the surety was included, as well as the debtor, in the original obligation. But, in a case of punishment, where the offender alone was the object of the penalty, the admission of a substitute, being an act of grace, may be accompanied with such conditions as the Lawgiver shall choose to prescribe. It was not, therefore, inconsistent with justice, that in the present case it should be stipulated, that sinners should be pardoned, not immediately after they had offended, but at some period during their lives; and that, although from that moment they should be freed from the sentence of eternal death, they should remain under the original law of mortality. It was certainly in the power of the Supreme Legislator to determine, whether the whole penalty, or only a part of it, should be remitted. And the efficacy of the atonement appears from the removal of the principal part of the penalty, in comparison with which, the evil which is inflicted is as nothing, yea, less than nothing. Besides, that evil, in consequence of the atonement, has virtually the nature of a blessing, being corrective and not properly penal, subservient to the good of the soul, affording scope for the exercise of many virtues, and contributing to prepare the people of God for a happier and more perfect state. Death itself proves to be the gate of life.

With regard to the objection, that the doctrine of vicarious punishment is calculated to remove the restraint of salutary fear, and to encourage men to go on in sin that grace may abound, it is so stale, and so fully refuted by Scripture and experience, that I deem it unworthy of any farther notice.

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## LECTURE LIX.

### ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

The Intercession of Christ—Place of Intercession—Its Objects, the Elect—Mode of Intercession, Prayer—The subject of it—Its Cause or Reason—Christ the only Intercessor—The Popish Doctrine of the Intercession of Saints and Angels, contrary to Scripture and Reason.

WE have proved that Jesus Christ is the priest, as well as the prophet of his church, and that there were two important duties incumbent on him in this character, sacrifice and intercession. The first he performed upon earth, when he died upon the cross; for it has appeared that his death was a true and proper sacrifice offered to God, to appease his justice, and to obtain our eternal redemption. It was, in truth, **THE SACRIFICE** by way of eminence, all others being merely types of it, and having no efficacy in themselves to expiate guilt. We now proceed to speak of his intercession, which signifies in general those

acts of his priestly office, the object of which is to obtain the communication of the benefits of his sacrifice to men, for their pardon and final salvation.—The proper place of his intercession is heaven, into which he entered not long after his resurrection, and where he will continue to minister till all the ends of his office are accomplished. But it is not confined to heaven, for we find him interceding in his state of humiliation. In this sense some understand that passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which it is said, that, “in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications to God, with strong crying and tears.”\* I doubt the propriety of this application of it, because the apostle expressly declares, that he offered his supplication “to Him that was able to save him from death,” representing them as supplications for himself, that he might be supported under his severe afflictions, and ultimately delivered from them. The intercession of Christ signifies his prayer for *us*. His prayer on the cross for his enemies has also been referred to his intercession, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”† Here, however, there is equal reason to doubt. If his intercession is prevalent, or if he always obtains what he asks in the character of our High Priest, it would follow, that all the persons who were concerned in his death will be forgiven.—But, although it is certain that many of them did afterwards repent, and acknowledge him to be the Son of God and the Redeemer of Israel, we are not warranted by Scripture to say, that mercy was extended to the whole multitude that demanded his crucifixion, to all the members of the Sanhedrim who pronounced him to be worthy of death, to Pilate who condemned him, to the Roman soldiers who executed the sentence, and to every individual who consented to the nefarious deed. We must, therefore, consider this prayer as expressive of the spirit of charity, which he has enjoined upon his followers, and of which his own conduct has afforded a perfect example. As a man, he forgave his persecutors, and it was his desire that his Father would forgive them. His official prayers are founded on his knowledge of the purpose of God with respect to individuals; his private prayers on the law, which commands every man to desire the good of others, and to promote it by all lawful means in his power. But, while we leave out these cases, there remains enough to show that Christ acted as an intercessor in his state of humiliation. As he was often engaged in prayer, and sometimes spent whole nights in it, there is no doubt that the subject of his supplications was not himself alone, but his disciples and his church in every age of the world. He told Peter that he had prayed for him that his faith might not fail; and on the evening before his crucifixion, he presented a solemn address to his Father for all his followers, which is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.”‡ Although he had not yet died as a propitiation for sin, yet he commenced the work of intercession, because he was already invested with the priestly office, and the atonement would be soon made, from which all the efficacy of his prayers is derived. It was allowed him to anticipate the work of heaven, because it was certain that he would not fail to satisfy the demands of justice, and to pay the price of spiritual blessings.

The Scripture represents the intercession of Christ as consisting in his appearance for us in the heavenly sanctuary. “Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”§ When he had risen from the dead, he ascended to the celestial temple, the seat of the glorious presence of God; and he entered in the character which he had sustained

\* Heb. v. 7.

† Luke xxiii. 34.

‡ John xvii. 20.

§ Heb. ix. 24.



upon earth, namely, that of our representative. After his resurrection he showed himself to his disciples, with the wounds in his hands, and feet, and side, which his enemies had inflicted, and, as nothing is said which implies that they afterwards disappeared, it may be supposed that they remained when he returned to heaven. This may seem to be confirmed by one of the visions of John: "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it had been slain;"\* that is, bearing the marks of a violent death. Hence it has been conjectured, that he appears before God with the visible tokens of his sufferings in his body, as the Jewish high priest carried into the holy of holies a part of the blood of the animal sacrifices, in testimony that they had been slain. It is certain, however, that this exhibition is not necessary to remind his Father of his merits, nor is it for this purpose that it can be conceived to be made. Since it will be acknowledged not to be essential to the design of his ministrations in heaven, it may be questioned whether it be consistent with the present state of his body; and although it would be presumptuous to speak decidedly on a subject of which we know so little, it may be said, with some appearance of truth, that it is not suitable to our conceptions of a glorified body, that it should retain any vestige of infirmity, any mark, however honourable from the manner in which it was acquired, which might in any degree impair its beauty. Laying aside, therefore, this notion, which is more fanciful than solid, we understand his "appearance for us in heaven" to signify, that he presents himself before God in the body which was crucified for our sins, and in the character of our High Priest, to plead his atonement as the ground on which the blessings of salvation should be communicated to men. It signifies, not the simple presentation of his human nature; for although God manifests himself in a peculiar manner in the upper world, we are as really, though not as sensibly, present with him on earth as in heaven; but an official presentation of it, or, in other words, a ministration by which the design of his office is accomplished. Jesus Christ has left this world, but he has not ceased to act as our High Priest. He retains his office, and performs its duties in his state of exaltation.

Before I proceed to point out more distinctly the nature of his intercession, it will be proper to inquire for whom he intercedes. We may say, then, that he intercedes for the elect, whether they are, or are not in a state of grace.—With regard to those who are not converted, he does not pray, that, continuing as they are, they should be saved, or that their state should be immediately changed; but that, at the appointed time, they should be brought to the knowledge of the truth: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."† These words he spake upon earth, and we cannot doubt that he is still as mindful of those who have not yet entered into the fellowship of his Church. Although living in ignorance and sin, they are dear to him as persons for whom he shed his blood. He looks forward to their conversion as the reward of his sufferings; and it is owing to his appearance in their behalf, that the Holy Spirit is sent to "open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of their sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith."‡ Faith is the gift of God, and is bestowed upon those alone for whom our Saviour prays; "for in him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings."§ Enough has been said with respect to this class of the objects of his intercession.

The other class comprehends those who are in a state of grace, and of his prayers for them we shall afterwards speak. He does not pray for all men who

\* Rev. v. 6.

† John x. 16.

‡ Acts xxvi. 18.

§ Eph. i. 3.

are at present alive, or shall hereafter come into existence. His intercession is not more extensive than his sacrifice; and he has told us, that, "as the good Shepherd, he has given his life for the sheep."\* He has pointed out its limits in the following words: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." "Neither pray I for these alone,"—the few disciples who had attached themselves to him during his public ministry,—“but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.”† Under the Mosaic economy, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraven upon twelve precious stones in the breast-plate which the high priest wore when he appeared before God in the most holy place, and in this manner it was signified that he was the representative of the whole nation. The twelve tribes were typical of believers under the gospel, who are the spiritual Israel; and Jesus Christ, their representative, bears them upon his heart in the heavenly sanctuary. He remembers them with the most tender affection, and manages their affairs with wisdom and fidelity. He did not shed his blood at random, as would have been the case if the sole design of his death had been to render God placable to sinners, and to pave the way for the salvation of those who should comply with the terms upon which it was offered. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," for they were given to him by his Father, and he has taken them under his protection. They live in distant ages; they are scattered over the face of the earth; they are placed in different circumstances; and some of them are so obscure, such solitary and disregarded sojourners in the vale of tears, that their nearest neighbours know little of their character, and still less of their wants and sorrows. But he is as fully acquainted with the case of each individual as if he were the sole object of his care; and hence, as he is a merciful, so he is a faithful High Priest, who does not neglect the interest of the poorest and meanest of his followers. He observes them all, who said to Nathanael, "When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee."‡

In his intercession, Jesus Christ expresses his desire for the salvation of his people. We have seen that he appears for them in the presence of God; but that something more is implied than the simple presentation of himself in our nature, we may infer from his own information: "I will pray the Father, and he will send you another Comforter." We know that, in reference to men, prayer is the offering up of their desires to God for the blessings which they need; and we have no reason to think that, in the present case, the meaning is materially different.

Prayer is not inconsistent with the dignity of the human nature of our Saviour, as united to the second Person of the Trinity, and at present in a state of exaltation. In that nature he executed his offices during his residence upon earth, and in the same nature he continues to perform the duties of his priesthood. It is now glorified; but it is essentially the same as it was in its state of humiliation. It then was, and it still is, a creature, and consequently is dependent upon God, and cannot therefore be dishonoured or degraded by an act which flows from that dependence, or belongs to any office with which it is invested. We have seen that it was not deified when it became the nature of him who is God; and although, being now above all want, the man Christ Jesus does not stand in need of prayers for himself, as related to men, who are encompassed with sins and infirmities, and have no resources in themselves, he may be conceived to pray for them without any diminution of his dignity. What, indeed, can be more honourable to him than to interpose between God and the human race, and to obtain, by his requests, the supplies of the Holy Spirit, by which thousands and millions are sanctified and comforted?

\* John x. 11.

† John xvii. 9, 20.

‡ John i. 48.



Prayer, among men, signifies not only mental desire, but also the use of words in which the desire is expressed. Whether it has the same meaning when it is ascribed to our Intercessor in heaven, we are unable to determine. We are certain that, even upon earth, words are not necessary to inform God of our desires, although, in respect of ourselves and others, they serve a variety of valuable purposes. It is possible, therefore, that they are not employed in the intercession of Christ, and that it is represented as consisting in praying to the Father, solely in accommodation to our ideas and usages, while nothing more is meant than that he desires the salvation of his people, and his desire is known to his Father. But we do not venture to deliver a positive opinion upon a point so obscure, and the determination of which would contribute nothing to our edification.

But although the prayer of Christ, in his present state, is materially the same with that of men, we must separate from our notion of his intercession every adjunct which arises from human infirmity, and conceive of it as different from the prayers which he offered up upon earth, "with strong crying and tears."\* At the same time, we must beware of going to the opposite extreme, as some Divines have done, who talk of his intercession as authoritative. They do not mean that his prayers are commands, peremptory orders that what he asks should be done, but that he speaks as one who has a right to be heard. Yet, although it be true that he has a title to receive the blessings of salvation for his people, because he purchased them with his blood, it would be altogether improper to suppose, that the knowledge of this right gives such a tone to his prayers as would change them into simple volitions. This would be improper, because they are the prayers of one who, whatever is his present dignity, and how great soever is his merit, still sustains the character of a minister or servant, and because it would destroy the nature of intercession, by substituting for desire an intimation of will. To intercede, is to ask something from another. Now, although our Redeemer does not ask like us, who ought to be humble from a consciousness of unworthiness, yet he undoubtedly continues to feel, and to express, the same reverence for the majesty and authority of his Father, by which he was distinguished upon earth. The passage upon which this view of his intercession is founded, gives countenance to it only as it appears in translations, and particularly in our own: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."† Some critics have supposed that the word *θελω*, *I will*, is expressive of authority. It is acknowledged that it does sometimes convey this idea; but it is only from the circumstances in which it is used that this sense can be inferred; because, in other cases, and, I may add, most frequently, it merely imports simple volition, or desire. When our Lord said to the Syrophenician woman, *καὶ ὅτι αὐτὴς θέλει*, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt,"‡ *θελω* can admit the sense only of *desiring* or *wishing*. The meaning is evidently the same, when he said to the two sons of Zebedee, *τι θέλετε ποιῆσαι ἐμὴν*; "What would ye that I should do for you?"§ It would be easy to make a large collection of examples. The common interpretation of the word, therefore, should be retained, unless there be a good reason for deviating from it; and in the present case there is none, except the mistaken idea that, by introducing the notion of authority, we shall add dignity to the intercession of Christ, and more clearly discriminate between his prayers and those of sinful men. But critics and commentators should beware of forming doctrines, however plausible, and even although true, from passages and words in which they are not contained. They have committed this error, I apprehend, in the case before us. They have affixed

\* Heb. v. 7.

† John xvii. 24.

‡ Matt. xv. 28.

§ Mark x. 36.

an arbitrary sense to the verb *θεωω*, and, in doing so, have missed their own end; for, in attempting to give a more exalted idea of the intercession of Christ, they have destroyed its nature, as was formerly observed, by representing it, not as prayer, which he himself calls it, but as an authoritative volition. The proper translation of the word is not *volo*, but *velim*, in Latin; and in English, not *I will*, but *I would*; that is, 'I desire that those whom thou hast given me may be with me.'

I shall now point out, in some particulars, the subject of his intercession.

First, He prays that his disciples may be preserved in a state of grace: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."\* The blessing for which he prays is protection, not from the violence of men, but from the evil of sin, or the evil one, "who, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." One great design of his intercession is, to prevent his followers from being overcome by temptation, from yielding to the terrors and allurements by which their constancy is tried, and to cherish the principle of grace in their souls, exposed as it is to the operation of causes which are hostile to its growth, and threaten its very existence. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."† We learn from the example of Peter, to what length a believer would go, if he were left to himself. In the moment of peril, he denied his Lord; and, adding profaneness to treachery, he denied him with oaths and imprecations. What restrained him from a total renunciation of his connexion with Christ, and from becoming a final apostate, like Judas? It was the prayer of our Intercessor which upheld his wavering faith, as his arm had once saved him from sinking in the water, and rekindled the dying flame of love in his breast. It is a consoling truth, that believers cannot fall from a state of grace; but their stability is not owing to their own wisdom, and vigilance, and activity. "Because I live," says their Redeemer, "ye shall live also."‡ By seasonable but imperceptible communications of grace, the tendency of their hearts to evil is checked before it has carried them beyond a state of salvation; their holy dispositions, however faint and languid they may become, are preserved from expiring; and they live on, amidst fears, and dangers, and failures, till the feeble germ of life burst forth into immortal vigour and luxuriance.

Secondly, He prays that their persons and services may be accepted. When they first believed, they were received into the favour of God; but they could not long retain themselves in this happy state. Every day they commit sin; which implies the same moral turpitude, and the same guilt, in the case of a believer as of an unbeliever. Every day, therefore, the fellowship between God and them would be broken, if Christ did not continue to officiate in their name, and obtain, by his intercession, the pardon of their transgressions. His appearance before the throne of God secures, that, although they may incur the displeasure and chastisement of their heavenly Father, they shall not fall under his curse; that, although the comfortable sense of his love may be suspended, it shall not be utterly taken from them. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."§ Their duties are holy, being performed under the influence of the Spirit of grace; but they are imperfect. There is often a mixture of improper motives. There is a want of intenseness of feeling and affection. The mind wanders in devotional exercises; and love is, in some degree, divided between God and the world. But the law requires absolute perfection, and its

\* John xvii. 11, 15.

† Luke xxii. 31.

‡ John xiv. 19.

§ 1 John ii. 1



demands are not abated in consequence of the mediation of Christ. Hence, if the best duties of the saints were weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, they would be found not to be of standard weight. If God should act according to justice,—and this is his rule of procedure towards those who presume to approach to him in their own name,—they would be rejected. But this consequence, which would be fatal to the hopes of believers, is prevented by the interposition of our Saviour, who intercedes for their acceptance on the ground of his own merits. What is good in their works, God approves, because it is the effect of his own grace. What is evil he forgives, in consideration of the atonement which he offered for them, who now ministers continually before him. We are commanded “to offer to God the sacrifice of praise,” and all our sacrifices, “by him;”<sup>\*</sup> because they will be pleasing to God only when presented by his Son, who can so powerfully recommend them. The object of his intercession is, that the Holy Spirit may be given, to enable believers to walk in the path of obedience, and so to assist their humble endeavours to serve God that they shall find favour in his sight. We are “accepted in the Beloved.” “O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.”<sup>†</sup> It has been supposed, with much probability, that the following passage is a figurative description of this part of his intercession, and that he is the angel who is represented as ministering at the altar: “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.”<sup>‡</sup>

In the third place, He answers the charges which are brought against his disciples. Satan is called “the accuser of the brethren,” and is said “to accuse them before God day and night.”<sup>§</sup> These are not words without meaning. We cannot give a distinct account of his proceedings; but it is evident that he does advance charges against the people of God, some of which are false, and require no refutation, as was the charge of hypocrisy against Job; but some also are true, being founded upon the sins which they have actually committed. If their consciences at the same time bear testimony against them, their minds must be in great distress, and they will feel the necessity of an advocate to plead their cause, and to prevent the sentence of condemnation from being pronounced, which they so justly deserve. Such an advocate is Jesus Christ, who replies to every accusation, and assigns valid reasons why his clients should be acquitted. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”<sup>||</sup> When Satan stood at the right hand of Joshua, the high priest, to resist him, “The Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” And the Angel said, the Angel of the covenant, who is here called JEHOVAH, “Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.”<sup>¶</sup>

Lastly, He prays for the eternal happiness of his followers in heaven. “I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, to behold my glory.”<sup>\*\*</sup> Our faithful High Priest will not desist from his work

<sup>\*</sup> Heb. xiii. 15.    <sup>†</sup> Eph. i. 6. Ps. lxxxiv. 8, 9.    <sup>‡</sup> Rev. viii. 3, 4.    <sup>§</sup> Ib. xii. 10.  
<sup>||</sup> Rom. viii. 33, 34.    <sup>¶</sup> Zech. iii. 2, 4.    <sup>\*\*</sup> John xvii. 24.

till it be finished. As he died, so he lives for his followers, and will continue to intercede for them till they come to the perfect enjoyment of salvation. Having gone into heaven, he will draw them to himself. Every man will follow in his order; and the mansions which he has prepared for them, will be filled with a glorious and happy company, redeemed with his blood, "out of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues." When the righteous die, we lament the loss which the church has sustained by the removal of persons whose wisdom and virtues edified and adorned it, and we regret that they have not been permitted to remain longer upon earth. When our pious friends are taken from us, we are apt to give way to the violence of our feelings, and to mourn as if a sad calamity had befallen them. But should we not consider, that the event which we deplore is to them unspeakable gain, the end of their faith, and the completion of their hope? They have gone to behold him whom they love, and to rejoice for ever in his presence. Should we not remember that, in this case, the prayers of Christ have prevailed over our wishes and entreaties? For why have they died at this time? Has death come by chance, or by the blind operation of natural causes? Have they fallen without special appointment? Had heaven no concern in what has taken place upon earth? If not a sparrow perishes without the knowledge of God, still less can it be supposed that a good man leaves the world without his call. His death is the answer of the Father to the prayer of his Son. It is the means of introducing into the presence of the Saviour, and into the embraces of his love, his dear disciples, for whom he shed his precious blood. He desires that they should be with him, and this messenger is sent to conduct them to their home. This is the reason that our tears, and sighs, and fervent supplications, were of no avail; for how could they succeed in opposition to the prayer of the all-powerful Intercessor! This is a pleasing view of the death of believers. It shows us that it is indeed a blessing to them; and, as it is calculated to moderate our sorrow, so it should make us pray for their life, with entire resignation to the will of the Head of the Church.

There is a passage which, at first sight, may seem to contradict what has been said concerning the intercession of Christ in the heavenly state: "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you."\* But, as in other passages he expressly affirms that he would pray for them, we must attempt to reconcile them with that now quoted; and the task is not difficult. His intention in the words before us was, not to deny that he would intercede for his followers, but to guard them against mistaking the design of his intercession, and thinking that there is some reluctance on the part of his Father to bestow blessings upon them, which his prayers were necessary to overcome. Accordingly, he adds—"For the Father himself loveth you; because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God."† He would have us know, and remember, that the love of the Father is the source of all spiritual blessings, and that his intercession is necessary only as the channel in which they are conveyed.

The Scripture speaks of the intercession of the Holy Ghost; but we must beware of conceiving of it as if it were of the same nature with the intercession of Christ. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered."‡ The Holy Ghost is not a mediator between us and God, for there is only one, the man Christ Jesus. He intercedes for believers not personally, but by his influences; not without them, but within them. Their prayers are not presented by him to the Father; but he enables them to intercede for themselves, by teach

\* John xvi. 26.

† Ib. 27.

‡ Rom. viii. 26.



ing them what they should pray for, and by exciting them to pray with importunity, and in the exercise of faith.

The intercession of Christ was typified by the entrance of the Jewish high priest into the most holy place, where he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices, and burnt incense before the mercy-seat. It is not, however, enough to say that such was the procedure under the legal economy, when we are inquiring into the reason of the intercession of our Saviour. It is certain that a type and a prophecy must be fulfilled; but neither the one nor the other is the cause of the event to which it relates. An event does not take place because it was prefigured or foretold; but the type was instituted and the prediction was delivered, because the event was predetermined. Jesus Christ does not intercede because the high priest of the law went into the holy of holies, after he had offered the anniversary atonement; but the high priest was appointed to appear before the propitiatory, to represent the ascension of our Redeemer, and his ministry in heaven.

The true reason of his intercession appears from some things which have been already said. The imperfection of the services of the saints requires that he should recommend them to God, because in themselves, even although they proceed from a principle of grace, they would not bear a strict examination, and according to the rules of justice would be rejected. There could be no acceptable religion without the intercession of Christ. His sacrifice upon the cross laid the foundation of religion; but it could not be maintained if he did not continue to mediate, and by the presentation of himself and his merits, to secure the covenant of peace from being broken. The dispensation of grace must be so conducted in every part of it, that the holiness of God shall shine with unclouded splendour. With this view he avoids immediate commerce with men, in the best of whom there are remains of sin. Between himself and them, he has placed our Redeemer, by whom all his perfections have been glorified, that, bestowing every favour upon men, and accepting their services solely for his sake, he may appear in the communications of his grace to be the Holy One, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon evil." Contemplating an awful Being who has published a law which demands perfection, and denounced punishment against every violation of it, the most eminent saints would be alarmed, and say, We cannot serve him. But the interposition of a person nearly related to them, who is a partaker of their nature, and has a feeling of their infirmities, authorises their humble confidence, and revives their expiring hopes. Conscious of defects in their best services, they yet venture to engage in them, because by him they are presented with acceptance to the Father. His intercession is necessary for the glory of God, and the encouragement of his people; and this is the reason that it constitutes an essential part of his priestly office. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."\*

It is acknowledged by Christians of all denominations, if Unitarians are excepted, whose claim to the Christian name we do not admit, that our exalted Redeemer intercedes for us in the heavenly sanctuary; but by a large class of them, a doctrine is maintained which entrenches upon this part of his sacerdotal office. You will perceive that I refer to the church of Rome, which teaches that there are other intercessors with God, namely, angels and glorified saints. The council of Trent "commands all bishops and others, who are employed in instructing the people, to teach the faithful, according to the practice of the

\* Heb. vii. 25, 26.

Catholic and Apostolic church from the earliest times, the consent of the Fathers, and the decrees of Holy Councils, that the saints reigning with Christ offer prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful to invoke them, and to betake ourselves to their prayers and assistance in order to obtain blessings from God through his Son; that those who deny that the saints, enjoying eternal felicity in heaven, ought to be invoked, or who assert either that they do not pray for men, or that the invocation of them is idolatry, and is contrary to the word of God, and injurious to the honour of Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, hold an impious opinion.”\* To prove that to employ the saints as intercessors, is not derogatory to the honour of Christ, or inconsistent with the acknowledgment that he is the only mediator, a distinction has been coined, of which there is not a vestige in the Scriptures, between a mediator of redemption and a mediator of intercession. The former character belongs exclusively to him; the latter is shared by the saints. The books of devotion in the Church of Rome, are full, not only of prayers to God that, for the merits and prayers of the saints, he would save the worshippers from guilt and eternal damnation, but also of prayers to them, that they would pray to God in behalf of those who call upon them. How often is the blessed Virgin in particular thus addressed, “*Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis.*” “*Sancta Dei genetrix, ora pro nobis.*” “*Virgo virginum, ora pro nobis.*” Similar prayers are offered up to all the apostles, and to all the saints in the calendar, and likewise to the angels who are also advanced to the dignity of mediators. “*Sancte Michael, ora pro nobis.*” “*Sancte Gabriel, ora pro nobis.*” “*Omnes sancti angeli et archangeli, orate pro nobis.*”

In the primitive times, those who had died for religion were held in great veneration. Their names were mentioned with honour: the day of their martyrdom, which was called their birth-day, because they then entered into glory, was celebrated, and the Christians assembled at their tombs to offer up prayers to God, and to excite themselves to faith and patience by the solemn recollection of their virtues. But they did not worship the saints, nor for the first three centuries was any mediator acknowledged but Jesus Christ alone. In process of time, however, men began to give high titles to the departed saints, and to address them, at first, it may be, after the manner of an orator apostrophising those who are absent; but those addresses grew into prayers, the object of which was to obtain their good offices in heaven, where their interest was supposed to be great. “Those who are well,” says Theodorit, “ask the preservation of their health, and those who are struggling with any disease, deliverance from their sufferings; the childless ask children, and such as are sent upon a journey entreat the saints to be their companions and their guides on the way; not approaching to them as gods, but supplicating them as divine men, and beseeching them to be intercessors for them.” Thus the foundation was laid, upon which an immense fabric of idolatry was reared by the church of Rome, where the worship of saints is established by law. These are such persons as the pope has canonized, or declared by a solemn act to be proper objects of worship. Some of them were unquestionably good men, although unworthy of this honour, which is due only to God and his Son; but others are doubtful characters, or ruffians and impostors, whose names should not be mentioned but in terms of execration, or imaginary beings who never existed but in fabulous legends.

Protestants have, with good reason, rejected the notion of angelical and human intercessors. There is not one word in the Scriptures to favour it, or rather it is expressly condemned by them. The worship of angels is one of the corruptions against which Paul warns us, in the Epistle to the Colossians;

\* Concil. Trident. Decreta, Sess. xxv. de invocatione, &c.



and still less, surely, is religious honour to be given to the saints, who are of an inferior nature. The pretended practice of the church from the earliest ages, (I call it pretended, because the practice was unknown in the primitive times,) the consent of fathers and the decrees of councils, are lighter than vanity in the estimation of those who consider human authority as of no value in matters of religion, and weigh all doctrines in the balance of the sanctuary. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

It is unnecessary to add any other argument against this doctrine, besides the want of scriptural authority; but we may observe, that the intercession of the saints presupposes that they hear our prayers, and are acquainted with our circumstances. But this is a gratuitous assumption. How can Papists prove that the saints in heaven know what is passing upon earth? To us it should seem, that being creatures limited in their powers, and confined to a particular place, they cannot, in a world so distant from ours, see what is done and hear what is spoken by men. The doctrine under consideration imports that they are omnipresent or omniscient; for how could the blessed virgin, for example, otherwise have any knowledge of the prayers which are addressed to her at the same time in ten thousand places, and it may be by millions of individuals? To say that the saints see all things in God, must mean, if it have any meaning, that they are endowed with the gift of omniscience, or at least that God reveals to them what he knows; that is, when men pray to the saints, God informs them that they are praying, and what are their desires, and thus qualifies them to be their intercessors. But where is the proof? For all this we have no evidence, except the authority of the infallible church, the mother of lies and all abominations.

It has been said, that it is as lawful to ask the saints in heaven, as the saints upon earth, to pray for us. Between the two cases, however, there is this difference, that we have a command in the one case, but none in the other; that the saints on earth hear us, while we have reason to think that those in heaven do not; that we do not pray to the saints upon earth, but merely request them; and that we do not consider them as intercessors in the sense of the Roman church, but simply as friends who will join with us in supplication to him who is the hearer of prayer. We use no such form as the following, but look upon it as in the highest degree impious, although it is found among the prayers of the Antichristian church: "Let the intercession of such a person, we beseech thee, O Lord, recommend us, that what we cannot obtain by our own merits, we may procure by his patronage."

I would ask the abettors of this idolatrous worship, Why should the saints intercede for us? Is it because Jesus Christ has not interest enough with his Father to obtain for us the blessings which we need? This, I presume, they will not dare to affirm, in the face of the express declaration, that he is able, by his intercession, to save us to the uttermost? Is it because he is so great that we may not venture upon an immediate approach to him? This notion is contrary to his own invitation to come to him, which is accompanied with a promise of rest to our souls. Is it because the saints are more nearly allied to us, being men like ourselves? The supposition is false, because our High Priest is also a man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and has had full experience of our infirmities. Is it because the saints are more disposed to sympathise with us? Here also they err to their own ruin, and the dishonour of our Redeemer, who as much excels all angels and all men in love and pity, as in dignity. "We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are."\*

\* Heb. iv. 15.

Upon him alone, therefore, we will depend, and say, in opposition both to Popish and to Pagan idolatry, which are indeed substantially the same, with only a change of names, "Though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."\* And if some men will still put their trust in beings, great in power, it is acknowledged, and elevated to the highest honours, but less than nothing when compared with Him upon whom we rely, we will add, "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges."†

## LECTURE LX.

### CHRIST'S STATE OF HUMILIATION.

*Distinction between the Condescension and Humiliation of Christ.—Circumstances of Humiliation; in his Birth, his Subjection to the Law, the Events of his Life, his Death, and his Burial.—Opinions respecting his "Descent into Hell."*

THERE are two states in which our Redeemer may be viewed, very different in themselves, but both necessary to the execution of his offices. The one exhibits him humbled and abased; the other exhibits him exalted and glorified. The first was not expected by the Jews, for reasons well known, and formerly mentioned. Their notions were natural to men who, disregarding the Scriptures, or attending to those parts of them alone which were congenial to their feelings and inclinations, permitted imagination to fill up the general outline of the character of the Messiah, as the deliverer of the people of God. What, indeed, should any man have expected when he first heard of the descent of the Son of God to the earth, but that he would appear in circumstances corresponding to his native dignity, and be revealed to mortal eyes by the rays of his Godhead, giving splendor to the veil of humanity which attempered his glory to our weakness? Might it not have been expected that his advent would be signalled by signs in heaven, and signs on earth; that the celestial spirits would wait upon him in a visible form; that princes and kings would lay their crowns and sceptres at his feet; that all the tribes of mankind, and in particular the nation of the Jews, would welcome him with shouts of joy and triumph; and that now, if upon any occasion, the words of prophecy would receive a literal fulfilment, that seas, and mountains, and forests, would break out into a universal chorus of praise? "But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts." Our Saviour did not come unnoticed to all the world, though but few were apprised of the arrival of the illustrious visitant. A great part of his life was spent in privacy and obscurity; when he came forward upon the public stage, he had to encounter the contempt and ridicule of the majority of his countrymen, and his short career terminated in ignominy and blood. All this, although foretold by the prophets, had been overlooked by the Jews, and hence the bitter disappointment which they felt, and the scorn with which they rejected his claims: "How can this man save us!"

The design of this Lecture is to trace the several steps of his humiliation

A distinction has been made between the condescension and the humiliation

\* 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6.

† Deut. xxxii. 31.



of Christ; the former consisting in the assumption of our nature, and the latter in his subsequent abasement and sufferings. The reason why the assumption of our nature is not accounted a part of his humiliation, is, that he retains it in his state of exaltation. The distinction seems to be favoured by Paul, who represents him as first "being made in the likeness of men," and then "when he was found in fashion as a man, humbling himself, and becoming obedient to the death of the cross."\* Perhaps this is a more accurate view of the subject; but it has not been always attended to by Theological writers, some of whom have considered the incarnation as a part of his humiliation. As we have already spoken of the incarnation, it is not necessary to settle the propriety of introducing it at present.

Jesus Christ did not bring his assumed nature from heaven, as some have dreamed, affirming that the Virgin was merely the conduit or channel through which it passed; nor was it formed like the body of Adam, out of the dust of the ground. It was, indeed, miraculously conceived; but it was composed, like the body of every human being, of the substance of his mother. He was literally "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." Had his nature not been derived from the same stock with ours, but only resembled it, there would not have been such a relation between us as should have rendered his mediation available for our good. If it was necessary that the precepts of the law, which we had violated, should be fulfilled, and its penalty should be executed, the surety must be one of ourselves, that his obedience and sufferings might be so far accounted ours, as to be imputed to us for our justification. Now, there was only one way in which he could be a partaker of our nature, namely, by being conceived and born of a woman; and surely it was the first step of his humiliation, that he submitted to a process by which, though all things were created by him, he was placed upon a level with his own creatures. He thus became a child, which, although it possesses all the elements of our nature, is considered as an imperfect being, because its faculties are in a dormant state; and, although destined afterwards to display the powers of intellect, it differs only in shape from the young of the irrational tribes. As we have no reason to suppose that, at this period, there was any other distinction between him and other infants, except his exemption from the taint of original sin, we may say that, when he was born, he knew not into what place he had come, was capable only of those sensations which every living being must feel as soon as it comes into contact with external objects, without being able to reflect upon them, and was helpless and entirely dependent upon others. Let us remember, that we are describing the state of him who is now "King of kings," and "Lord of lords," and was then "God over all blessed for ever." The apostle Paul, when speaking of this subject, makes use of a very strong expression, *ἐκένωσεν ἑαυτόν*, which our translators have rendered with a licence in which they have rarely indulged: "He made himself of no reputation;" while they ought to have said, "He emptied himself."† It is evident that Paul does not mean that he divested himself of his glory literally, but only economically; that is, he as effectually concealed it as if he had laid it entirely aside. No trace of Divine perfections could be seen in a new-born child. He who is greater than all, appeared in the lowest stage of human existence.

In addition to the circumstance of his birth, let us attend to the meanness of his condition. Judging according to our ideas of fitness, we might have expected that he would be the son of a mighty princess; that the place of his birth would be a magnificent palace; and that the king and the nobles of Judea would be assembled to receive, with every demonstration of reverence and joy, this wonderful child, whose career would be so glorious, and whose future

\* Phil. ii, 7, 8.

† Ib. ii. 7.

empire would extend over heaven and earth. But this expectation was not realised in a single particular. There were, indeed, some circumstances which shed a transient splendour on his birth, as the appearance of angels, who announced it to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, and the visit of the eastern Magi, who, conducted by a miraculous star, came to adore him, and to present their gifts. God would not permit his Son to come into the world altogether unnoticed; and, in his deepest abasement, he bore testimony to him whom men despised, by signs and wonders. But, in every other respect, nothing could be more lowly than his entrance upon this earthly scene. His mother, indeed, was a descendant from the family which once swayed the sceptre in Jerusalem; but this was only a nominal honour, which did not protect her and her offspring from the contempt with which poverty is regarded by the world. It is an empty homage which is paid to the children of kings, who, for ages, have ceased to reign; and the honours of blood are forgotten when all their former glory is obscured by the meanness of their present condition. Mary was a woman in the most humble rank of society; and her husband was a mechanic, who earned his bread by the labour of his hands. The most illustrious female, it is true, was unworthy to be the mother of the Son of God, and her station would have reflected no dignity upon him; but we must judge, at present, by a human standard, and, in this view, he humbled himself, when he stooped to be born of the wife of a carpenter.

Conformable to the lowly station of his mother, was the place where he first drew the breath of life. He was born in Bethlehem, that prophecy might be fulfilled; but Bethlehem was not the chief city of the kingdom. It was little among the thousands of Judah, celebrated, indeed, as the city of David, but a small town at some distance from the capital. In Bethlehem, although the city of David, his illustrious Son did not meet with an honourable reception. When Joseph and Mary arrived there, it was so crowded with strangers, who had assembled in obedience to the decree of the emperor, to be enrolled, that there was no room for them in the inn. They, therefore, took up their residence in a stable; and there was he brought forth who was to rule over the house of Jacob for ever. In this obscure manner did he make his appearance upon earth. No person knew who he was but his parents, and a few shepherds who had received information from a heavenly messenger. Others, who might accidentally hear of the event, would consider him as the lowest of the low, on account of the humble circumstances of his parents, and the unusual place of his nativity. Who would have thought of searching for the Redeemer of Israel, and the Son of the Most High, in an out-house appropriated to the use of cattle? Who would have supposed, if he had by chance seen an infant lying in a manger, and attended by two unknown individuals, that this was he of whose advent and glory prophets had spoken in strains of enraptured eloquence? Who could have recognised in this unpromising form, the Saviour of the human race, the future Judge of angels and men?

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”\* Attend to the important fact, that he was made under the law, for it was an eminent part of his humiliation, and, at the same time, accounts for the other particulars in which it consisted. You will perhaps ask, how he could be humbled by subjection to the law, since this is the necessary condition of all men, and all angels; and it is the glory as well as the happiness of a creature, to obey his Creator? It is not enough to say, that his humiliation appears from the consideration, that he of whom we speak was more than a creature, and, in his Divine person, was above the law; for, although his subjection to it was the act of his person, as were all his media-

\* Gal. iv. 4.



torial acts, yet it was only as a man that he was or could be under its authority. Let it be observed, that when Christ is said to be under the law, we do not consider it simply as the standard of duty, but as possessing that form which it acquired when God converted it into a covenant with men. He was made under the law, in all the obligations which it imposed upon us, both in requiring obedience to its precepts as the condition of life, and denouncing its penalty as the recompense of our transgressions. The law regarded him as the representative of sinners, and demanded the unabated fulfilment of its terms. It was enjoined upon him, who, in consequence of his relation to the second Person of the Trinity, had a title to the highest honour and felicity, and might have ascended to reign in heaven as soon as he was born upon earth, to go through a course of obedience amidst toil and sorrow, in order to obtain eternal glory for himself, as well as eternal life for his followers. Notwithstanding his unspotted purity, he was treated by the law as if he had been a sinner. It arraigned him before its tribunal, and condemned him to bear the punishment which it had pronounced upon the guilty. By being made under the law, he was made under the curse. The curse is the sentence by which the transgressor is doomed to suffer; and he was subjected to it, by becoming our surety. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."\* A more humiliating situation cannot be conceived. The Son of God is confounded with the meanest and vilest of mankind. The law made no concession to his dignity; it waived none of its rights in his favour. It spoke to him with the same high tone of authority in which it addresses a mere mortal; it was equally strict and unrelenting in its demands; nothing less would satisfy it than his blood, as a compensation for the wrongs which it had sustained from those whom he had undertaken to befriend.

The subjection of our Saviour to the law, accounts for all the other parts of his humiliation. As it would not have been fitting, that he who stood in the room of sinners, should have spent his days in ease and splendour, so his degradation and sorrows were necessary to fulfil the demands of the law. The Deliverer of mankind must submit to the labour, and suffering, and death to which they were doomed, because it was not by an exertion of physical strength that his design should be accomplished, but by such moral acts as should uphold the authority and honour of the law, although those who had transgressed it were forgiven. You perceive, then, that the humiliation of Christ was not the consequence of an arbitrary appointment. It was an essential part of a great plan, originating in the wisdom and justice of God, for the manifestation of the glory of his attributes in the redemption of the world. "Although he was rich, yet, for our sakes, he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich."†

We know little about our Saviour in the early part of his life, till, at twelve years of age, he appeared in the temple, and astonished the doctors by his wisdom; except that, for the preservation of his life from the murderous designs of Herod, he was carried by his parents into Egypt, and brought back to Galilee when the danger was past. Many stories, indeed, are to be found in an ancient composition, called the Gospel of the Infancy; but they rest entirely upon the authority of the anonymous author, and are too silly and absurd to deserve a moment's attention. While a child, he was dependent, like other children, upon others; and, although there is no doubt that the blessed Virgin treated him with the most tender affection, it was impossible that he should not have suffered through the inattention, and neglect, and awkwardness of those to whose care he was occasionally committed. Living among imperfect mortals, he must have experienced the effect of their ignorance and irregular

\* Gal. iii. 13.

† 2 Cor. viii. 9.

tempers, especially while his mental faculties, not being sufficiently matured, nor his bodily strength confirmed, he was not yet qualified to manage himself. His food might be withheld, when his appetite craved it; his rest might be disturbed by unseasonable intrusions; his mind might be vexed by the peevishness and frowardness of those with whom he associated. These things are only matters of conjecture; but they are by no means improbable, as he was placed in circumstances exactly similar to those in which we find ourselves. It may be thought, indeed, that, as the Son of God, he would always command profound reverence, and uninterrupted attention to his comfort; but amidst the familiarity of daily intercourse, even his parents might sometimes think of him only as a child; and to his fellow-creatures and neighbours, perhaps, his dignity was unknown. Of this there can be no doubt, that it was humiliating to such a person, to be found in a situation in which he was indebted to others for the necessities of life, and for instruction and protection, and was exposed to the rudeness of the young and the caprice of the old. When he grew up, it is probable that he was engaged in the same occupation with Joseph, his reputed father, whose circumstances might render it necessary that Jesus should contribute his labour for the maintainance of the family. Thus the Lord of all was reduced to a level with the lowest of the human race, and literally underwent that part of the curse, which doomed man "to eat bread in the sweat of his face." He is called not only *ὁ τοῦ τεκτονὸς υἱός*,\* *the carpenter's son*, but *ὁ τεκτων*,† *the carpenter*. The word is equivalent to the Latin term *faber*, which signifies a workman, the nature of whose employment is specified by the adjectives, *ferrarius*, *ærarius*, *ligneus*, denoting respectively *a blacksmith, a brazier or coppersmith, a carpenter or worker in wood*. The last is the occupation in which our Saviour is commonly supposed to have been engaged.‡

Of his public life, there is a more ample detail in the Gospels, from the narrative in which it appears, that he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." We have no reason to think that he was subject to disease. We never read that he was sick, or that he suffered any of those pains which are inflicted upon us by alterations in the state of our bodies. As he was perfectly holy, there were no seeds of decay and dissolution in his frame. But he experienced all the other sinless infirmities of our nature. He was hungry, and thirsty, and weary; he felt the inconvenience of excessive cold and heat; and, as he was endowed with the common passions and feelings of human nature, he was not a stranger to disappointment, and vexation, and sorrow, and the pangs of unrequited kindness and violated friendship.

To those evils were added the hardships of poverty. He became literally poor when he assumed our nature; and, in doing so, he humbled himself, because he was originally rich. The Possessor of heaven and earth had not where to lay his head; he could not call the lowliest cottage in Judea his own. Women ministered to him; he was often indebted for his daily bread to the hospitality of others; and, when the tribute for the use of the temple was demanded from him, he found it necessary to work a miracle to obtain the small sum of a *statér*, equal in value to half-a-crown, for himself and Peter.

During his public ministry, if he was admired and followed by some, he was hated and persecuted by others. The indignation of the proud rulers, and worldly-minded Pharisees, was caused by the loftiness of his pretensions, and the lowliness of his condition. His doctrine gave them particular offence, because it was levelled against their corruptions of religion, and exposed to public view their base dispositions, and the crimes in which they secretly indulged. Their rage and malice were vented in terms of obloquy, and every

\* Matt. xiii. 55.

† Mark. vi. 3.

‡ Justin Mart. Dial. cum Trypho.



opprobrious name was applied to him, to stain his reputation, and render him odious in the eyes of the people. He was called a glutton, and a drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners, and an emissary of Satan, who, in concert with that spirit, and aided by his power, was carrying on a nefarious design of blasphemy and wickedness. To these efforts of malignity he was not insensible, notwithstanding his consciousness of perfect innocence. Hence he expresses his feelings in the following affecting language: "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none."\*

Men of flesh and blood were not the only enemies with whom he had to contend. The hostility of the old serpent was awakened by the appearance of the seed of the woman, against whom he directed his malicious, but ineffectual efforts. Immediately after his baptism, he was carried into the wilderness by the devil, where, for forty days, he was exposed to his temptations, and overcame them; not, however, we may be certain, without enduring much mental uneasiness, arising from the importunate and impudent solicitations of his adversary, and from the abhorrence which his impious suggestions excited. No subsequent opportunity of harassing him would be neglected by the vigilant and unwearied malignity of the alarmed and enraged spirit, whose kingdom he had come to overthrow. Of his final assault upon him at the close of his life, we have a hint, and only a hint, so that we cannot explain in what manner it was conducted, nor tell what trouble it caused to his illustrious opponent: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."† And again, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness."‡ This, however, we know, that, by his immediate temptations, and by stirring up wicked men to betray and crucify him, he accomplished what had been foretold from the beginning, that the heel of our Saviour should be bruised.

All these sufferings were severe; but they were light when compared with the sorrow which he felt from a sense of Divine wrath. The wrath of God does not signify furious anger, as in the case of men, but calm displeasure against sin, expressed in the punishment of offenders. Our Lord Jesus Christ was the object of it, not considered in himself, for he was the beloved Son of God, but as the representative of the guilty, who had engaged to "bear their griefs, and carry their sorrows." It was with our sins that his Father was displeased; and as our Saviour had made them his own in a legal sense, by the voluntary susception of the office of our surety, he experienced the effects of the Divine anger, not only in bodily pain, but also in mental anguish. The scene exhibited in the garden of Gethsemane was awful: "Being in agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."§ An agony signifies, in this case, a violent agitation of the mind, in which every excruciating feeling was mingled, except remorse and despair. The intensity of his anguish was demonstrated by the effect upon his corporeal frame. It has been questioned, whether this was literally a bloody sweat, or only resembled blood in the largeness of the drops. On the one hand, we may conceive his body to have been agitated to such a degree by the commotion of his mind, that a part of the blood was forced from the veins, and mingled with the other moisture which exuded from his pores. On the other, we may plead that the expression used by the evangelist necessarily implies no more than resemblance, ὡς μεγάλας ἄμυατος, which is rendered in our version, *as it were great drops of blood*. Without venturing upon a positive decision of this question, although the latter opinion seems to be more probable, we observe that the agony of his mind must have been dreadful; for, even upon the lowest supposition, what could have produced such profuse

\* Ps. lxi. 20.

† John xiv. 30.

‡ Luke xxii. 53.

§ Ib. xxii. 44.

perspiration in the open air, at a season when the night may be presumed to have been cold, and in a person of so much fortitude and self-command, but an intensity of mental feeling, which cannot be accounted for by any natural cause? The causes of his agony which some men have assigned, with a view to evade the evidence which it affords of the expiatory nature of his sufferings, are manifestly inadequate. To talk of its arising from the foresight of the treachery of Judas, the desertion of his disciples, the unbelief of the Jews, and the wickedness of mankind, is to say any thing rather than acknowledge the truth; and to suppose that it arose from the fear of death, would be to degrade him below his own followers, many of whom encountered death in as terrible a form, not only with composure, but with triumph. Nothing but the burden of our guilt could have made him lie prostrate on the ground; nothing but an appalling sense of Almighty vengeance could have extorted from him the thrice-repeated prayer: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Bitter must have been the ingredients of a cup, which he would have put away from his lips, although it was presented to him by the hand of his Father, and he had long purposed to drink it. How profound was his humiliation! We see him in extreme anguish, giving signs of ineffable distress by the agitation of his body; shedding tears, and uttering vehement cries; kneeling in the posture of a suppliant, and sinking to the earth under the dreadful pressure of his woes.

But his sorrows were not yet at an end. The solemnity of this scene was disturbed by the intrusion of a band of ruffians, who, in obedience to the command of their masters, rudely laid hold upon him, and dragged him as a felon to the tribunal of the high-priest, where he was accused of the foulest crimes, and subjected to every indignity. He was reviled and insulted in all the forms which inveterate and unmanly hostility could invent: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting."\* There, at the judgment-seat of Pilate, and in the presence of Herod and his courtiers, he was treated as the vilest of mankind, and at last was delivered up as a victim to the clamour of the rabble. We then see him led forth to Calvary, and nailed to a cross, on which he hung for some hours, till he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Of the various modes of taking away life by violence, crucifixion is probably the most tormenting. It is one of the many contrivances of barbarity, the object of which is to make the unhappy sufferer feel himself dying. He was fixed to the cross with nails driven through his hands and his feet. Besides the exquisite pain caused by the perforation of so many parts full of nerves, which are the instruments of sensation, great torment must have arisen from the distension of his body, the forcible stretching of its joints and sinews by its own weight. To this circumstance he alludes in the twenty-second Psalm: "I may tell all my bones." "All my bones are out of joint."† There are some kinds of torture, which, by their severity, bring speedy relief. Nature sinks under them, and is released. As, in crucifixion, no vital part was touched, life was sometimes protracted for days. Our Lord expired sooner than the malefactors on his right hand and on his left, perhaps because he was partly exhausted by his previous agony; but even his sufferings lasted for six tedious hours; for they began at nine in the morning, and did not end till three in the afternoon.

Some modes of putting persons to death are deemed more honourable than others, although it is the merest fiction of imagination to attach an idea of honour to what is in its own nature a disgrace as well as a punishment. The most ignominious was reserved for our Saviour, who suffered the death of a slave. Crucifixion was a Roman punishment, but was accounted so infamous

\* Is. i. 6.

† Ps. xxii. 17, 14.



that it could not be inflicted on a Roman citizen; only the offscouring of mankind were nailed to the cross. The very manner, therefore, of our Saviour's death was a part of his humiliation. He was exhibited on Calvary as a man who had no civil rights, who was protected by no law, whom society regarded as an outcast; as one who had not only forfeited his life by his crimes, but deserved to be associated with the lowest and most worthless of our species. Accordingly, to add to the ignominy of his sufferings, and to express the utmost contempt for him, two malefactors were led forth to be crucified along with him: two robbers, as the word signifies which we have translated thieves, who, by their daring outrages, had called down upon their heads the just vengeance of the laws. In the midst of these he was crucified, as if he had been the worst of the three; and thus the prophecy was fulfilled, "And he was numbered with the transgressors."\*

The last circumstance which demands our attention, is, that he suffered an accursed death; for the law of Moses had said, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."† There is some difficulty in settling the meaning of this denunciation. It cannot signify that every person who was hanged upon a tree, was doomed to eternal perdition; because the sentence which fixes the future state of men, depends no more upon the manner of their death than upon any other trivial circumstance. But whatever be its import, it is applied to our Saviour; and we are taught to consider the manner of his death as an indication that he died under the curse of the law. It was Pilate who condemned him to the cross; but the sentence was ratified at a higher tribunal, and with aggravations which the power of the Roman governor could not add to it. He died by the sentence of his Father acting as a righteous judge, and subjecting him to the punishment of sin. Great, therefore, as were his bodily torments, there were unseen sorrows which were far more severe; sorrows of the same kind with those which caused his agony in the garden, and the extremity of which drew from him that mournful complaint, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"‡

How great was his humiliation! The Lord of life and glory appeared like a common mortal and was distinguished only by the intensity of his sufferings, and the state of complete dereliction in which he expired. The multitude looked on with un pitying eyes: heaven frowned in preternatural darkness, and all consolation was withheld from him.

We shall have finished this view of the humiliation of Christ when we have added, that his body being taken down from the cross, was committed to the tomb, where it remained in a state of insensibility for at least thirty-six hours. Had it been immediately restored to life, it would have been said that it did not die, but only fainted on the cross; and the evidence of his messiahship, which his resurrection affords, would have been weakened. Had it continued longer under the power of death, the natural process of corruption would have commenced, unless preserved by a miracle. But the Scripture had foretold that the Holy One of God should not see corruption;§ and, accordingly, the time was abridged; and on the morning of the third day he arose in triumph from the grave.

When Joseph had taken down his body from the cross, he laid it in his own sepulchre, which he had hewn out of a rock. May we not observe in this circumstance an illustration of the poor and destitute condition to which he had descended? Although it was his own world in which he sojourned, yet he was in it, not as a Lord, but as a servant—not as a possessor, but as a stranger who has no interest in any thing around him. His entrance into it was humiliating; his passage through it was comfortless; and when at last it

\* Is. liii. 12.

† Gal. iii. 13.

‡ Matt. xxvii. 46.

§ Ps. xvi. 10.

cast him out as one unworthy to breathe the air, and see the light of the sun, there was no place to receive him save a tomb which one of his disciples had prepared for himself. It was the sepulchre of a rich man—but its present tenant was poor indeed. Yet why, we may say, should he have had a sepulchre of his own? Other men may provide a solitary dwelling for their bodies, for the sleep of the grave is long. It is their last abode, of which they will keep possession for ages; for “man lieth down, and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.”\* But our blessed Lord was like a way-faring man, who tarries only for a night in some resting-place which he finds on the road. The next morning he hastens away from it, and pursues his journey to his home.

Our Redeemer stooped low indeed when he assumed our nature, but lower still when he submitted to be laid in the grave. This is the last degree of humiliation. All the glory of man is extinguished in the tomb. If we viewed his prosperity with an eye of indifference, we now pity him; if his splendour excited our envy, the feeling dies away and hostility relents, when he, who, like a flourishing tree, spread his branches around, now lies prostrate in the dust. Who is this that occupies the sepulchre of Joseph? Is it a prophet or a king? No; it is one greater than all prophets and kings, the Son of the living God, the Lord of heaven and earth; but there is now nothing to distinguish him from the meanest of the human race; the tongue which charmed thousands with its eloquence is mute, and the hand which controlled the powers of the visible and invisible world is unnerved. The shades of death have enveloped him, and silence reigns in his lonely abode.

In the Apostles' Creed, it is said that “Christ descended into hell.” With respect to the meaning of this article, there has been a great diversity of opinion. Some have supposed it to signify his burial; and, at first, when his descent into hell was mentioned, his burial was omitted: but both are now found in the creed. Others, again, have interpreted it of the state of the dead, or death itself, and of the place of souls, which is divided into two regions, the one in which the patriarchs and saints who died before his coming were detained, and the other the receptacle of the souls of the damned. Some supposed that he went to the former to carry the patriarchs and saints with him to heaven; and others, that he went to the latter place to triumph over Satan, and by preaching the Gospel, to deliver such of his captives as should believe. These are notions which do not receive the least countenance from Scripture, and may be dismissed without wasting time in refuting them.

It would not be incumbent upon us to take notice of the article under consideration, as the creed in which it occurs, although bearing the name of the Apostles, is a composition long posterior to their age, were it not that its language is borrowed from the Scriptures, into the meaning of every part of which it is our duty to inquire. The following words are found in the sixteenth Psalm, and are applied to our Saviour by Peter, in the second chapter of the Acts: “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”† *Адъс*, which is the word used in the New Testament, is derived from a *privative* and *αἰδω*, *I see*, or *ιδεν*, the infinitive of the second aorist. It signifies, therefore, the invisible state of the dead; and, although it may sometimes denote the grave, it admits of a more extensive sense, and comprehends the place of the soul. The same is the meaning of the Hebrew word, *שְׁאוֹל*, in the Old Testament. It is derived from *שאל*, *to ask*; and denotes the place concerning which inquiry is made, because it is unseen and unknown. The word *hell*, is now used for the place of the damned; but originally it signified something obscure and concealed, and is of much the

\* Job xiv. 12.

† Acts ii. 27.



same import with שׁוּל and ἀδης. This, therefore, is the sense of the passage in the Psalms: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in the invisible state; nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." Our Saviour is speaking of his death, by which his soul and body would be separated; the one going into the unseen state, the other being laid in the grave. The words are a prediction of his resurrection, and are applied to this event by the apostle: "David, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption."\* God would bring back his soul from the invisible state, and reunite it to his body, before it was corrupted.—This explanation frees the passage from the perplexity in which it has been involved by those who, supposing שׁוּל and ἀδης to signify only the grave, understood שׁוּל and ψυχη, which we translate *soul*, to mean the body; and thus, besides affixing an unusual and unnatural meaning to these words, represented the two parts of the verse as tautological. The view which we have given, preserves them distinct, and retains the common sense of the terms. The receptacle of our Saviour's soul was the invisible state, and the place of his body was the grave.

The humiliation of Christ manifests the greatness of his love, the riches of his grace. It was for us, men, and for our salvation, that he assumed human nature, and abased himself to the dust of death. He drew a veil over his glory, that he might remove our reproach, and raise us to heavenly honours; he groaned and died, that we might obtain immortal felicity. He has acquired a title to our everlasting gratitude, by the most astonishing sacrifices.

Let us learn humility from his example. Pride should be for ever renounced by the followers of a lowly Saviour. Every part of his conduct, during his abode upon earth, is calculated to put it to shame; and we have in vain traced his progress from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary and the sepulchre of Joseph, if we retain our unbending attitude, and refuse to stoop to our brethren at the call of charity. The scene which we have contemplated should dispose us to condescend to the meanest, and to divest ourselves of every worldly honour, when we are called upon to do so for the glory of God. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."†

## LECTURE LXI.

### CHRIST'S STATE OF EXALTATION.

The Resurrection of Christ—Preliminary Remarks Respecting it—Statement of the Evidence of his Resurrection.

ALTHOUGH, during the humiliation of our Saviour, a veil was drawn over his glory, yet some rays occasionally broke through, which manifested, to attentive spectators, his essential and official dignity. The sublime doctrines which he taught, the astonishing miracles which he performed, and the testimonies of the Divine approbation which were given to him, by voices and signs from heaven, proclaimed that he was the only-begotten Son of God, and the promised Redeemer of Israel. The dark scene of his death was illustrated by prodigies, which signified that he was no ordinary sufferer; for, at a time when there could be no natural eclipse of the sun, because the moon was in

\* Acts ii. 31.

† Matt. xi. 29.

full opposition, there was darkness over all the land, from the sixth to the ninth hour; and when he expired there was a great earthquake, which splitted the rocks, and laid open the tombs, and the veil which concealed the holy of holies in the temple was torn, by invisible hands, from the top to the bottom. Even his burial was not without honour; for, although he had been put to death in the most ignominious manner, and under the imputation of the greatest crimes, his body was wrapped in fine linen and precious spices, by two persons of high rank, and was deposited in a magnificent sepulchre.

These circumstances, however, gave only a partial relief to the deep gloom which had settled upon him. His life, from the manger to the tomb, was a course of profound abasement. It was not till his resurrection that the glory which was to follow his sufferings commenced. That event, which removed the ignominy of his cross, revived the hopes of his disciples, and is the sure foundation of our faith in him, it is the design of this lecture to consider.

It is related by the four evangelists, and referred to in innumerable places by the other writers of the New Testament, as a fact, of which no doubt was entertained among Christians; insomuch that, assuming it as a first principle universally acknowledged, they reason from it in support of the doctrines of the gospel, and for the confutation of errors. In the narratives of the evangelists there are some discrepancies, which have been represented by infidels as affecting their credibility. Learned men have taken great pains to remove the apparent contradictions, and to show how the different accounts may be reconciled. I shall not enter upon this discussion at present, but shall content myself with referring you to those who have treated directly of this subject, and of whom I shall mention two, to whose writings you have easy access,—West's Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; and the seventh preliminary Observation, and the one hundred and fiftieth section of Macknight's Harmony of the Four Gospels. Were we at present considering the Evangelists as inspired writers, it would be necessary to examine every thing in the account which they have left us that might seem to indicate that they are as fallible as other authors, and have actually erred; at present, however, we appeal to them, not in this character, but merely as persons who have related a fact of which they were competent witnesses.—Now, although we should allow that they are at variance in some particulars, this would not invalidate their testimony in the opinion of any reasonable man, as they all agree in the main fact, and differ only in some matters which are not of much importance. In other cases, we deem the evidence sufficient, when we find substantial truth with circumstantial variety; that is, when a number of witnesses positively attest the same fact, but disagree in some inferior points, which do not materially affect the truth of the general statement. Minute accordance rather awakens a suspicion of previous concert, while occasional discrepancy affords a strong presumption that the witnesses are independent, and that every man speaks from personal knowledge. The testimony of the Evangelists would, I have no doubt, be received as consistent and credible by any civil court, as not one of them has denied the great fact of the resurrection, or discovered the slightest hesitation in affirming it; and the differences among them, even although they were real, and not merely apparent, as has been satisfactorily shown, consist only in circumstances upon which the general truth of the history does not depend; as the precise time in the morning when the event took place, and the number of individuals who were present at a particular moment. It is manifest, that they did not write with a design to obviate objections; and that each of them, without considering what had been said, or might be said by others, recorded the event in the manner which occurred to his own mind. It is by comparing all their narratives, that we come to know the whole circumstances of the case, and are



able to show how one account may be reconciled with another. There are some parts of profane history, the general truth of which no person calls in question, although the testimony of those who have recorded them, is far from agreeing, in a variety of points. Let any of you read the history of Cyrus, by Herodotus and Xenophon, and you will find not only a diversity, but a contradiction, in several important particulars; yet it was never doubted that there was such a man, who conquered Babylon, and performed the other exploits which antiquity has ascribed to him. There is a case more to our present purpose, because it is recent, and is related by eye-witnesses, and others who are supposed to have received information from eye-witnesses. Ten narratives have been published, of the attempt made by the late king of France\* to escape, not long after the commencement of the revolution, which, in several points, contradict each other in the most wonderful and inexplicable manner, and furnish, it has been observed, a striking proof of the inaccuracy of human observation, and the infirmity of memory. Yet, notwithstanding the discrepancy among the witnesses with regard to the details, nothing is more firmly believed, than that the attempt was made, and did not succeed. We should have no reason to call in question the fact of the resurrection, although the differences in the narratives of the Evangelists were such, that we could not reconcile them, as they relate only to subordinate circumstances.

The account of the resurrection of our Saviour in the gospel of Matthew, which I shall quote, because it is the first, is as follows: "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him; lo, I have told you."<sup>†</sup> There is subjoined an account of the appearance of Christ to the women, and of his subsequent appearance in Galilee, which it is unnecessary to recite.

I shall make some preliminary observations, before I proceed to lay before you the evidence of our Saviour's resurrection. First, the event was not impossible, and, consequently, if sufficient evidence be produced, we ought to give credit to the narrative, however extraordinary it may appear. We indeed have not experienced such an event, having never seen any person raised from the dead; but as it would be a most irrational conclusion, that nothing is possible which we have not witnessed, so it cannot be denied that the cause assigned for the resurrection of Jesus was adequate. To a Theist, a man who believes the existence and almighty power of God, it will not seem incredible that he should raise the dead; there being no greater difficulty in the restoration of a body to life, than there was in originally forming it, and endowing it with a sentient and intelligent soul.

My second observation is, That if Jesus was the Messiah, his resurrection was necessary to vindicate his character from the charges with which it was loaded. The alleged crimes for which he was condemned to die, were imposture and blasphemy. The Jews, full of carnal ideas and expectations, did not believe that a man of an appearance so mean, and a condition so humble, could be the Son of God, and the great deliverer of their nation, whom their imagi-

\* Louis XVI.

† Matt. xxviii. 1-7.

nations had invested with the attributes of worldly grandeur: it seemed to them that his claim to these dignities was arrogant and impious. As Providence had permitted him to fall into their hands, it might have been supposed that it sanctioned their proceedings; and this conclusion would have been fully confirmed, if he had remained in the state of the dead. It would then have appeared that they had acted with laudable zeal for the honour of the Most High, who will not give his glory to another, and had been ministers of divine justice in awarding due punishment to one whom their law pronounced to be unworthy to live. It would have appeared that, instead of purposing to save mankind from ignorance and sin, Jesus had come to deceive them with false pretences, to amuse them with delusive hopes, and to lead them to final perdition, by persuading them to apostatise from the living God, and commit themselves to him as their guide. But his return to life prevented the unfavourable inferences, which either friends or enemies might have drawn from his tragical end. His resurrection, by the power of his Father, demonstrated that he acknowledged him as his Son and his servant. He had permitted his life to be taken away, because he required it as a sacrifice for the sin of his people; he restored it, to show that the demands of justice were satisfied. Hence the Scripture says, that "he was declared to be the Son of God with power,"\* by the resurrection from the dead,\*\* and that "the God of peace brought him again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant."† By this event, God acknowledged him to be his Son, and gave a solemn assurance that he is reconciled to guilty men.

A third observation is suggested by what has been now said, that our Saviour was raised by the power of his Father. Upon this fact depends the evidence, that he truly was what he affirmed himself to be. If God raised him from the dead, the sentence pronounced upon him by the Jews was reversed, and he who had expired in ignominy and torment was proved to be the Lord of glory. Sometimes, indeed, the New Testament ascribes the resurrection to our Saviour himself. Thus, we find him saying, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again;"‡ and when he speaks of his body under the image of a temple, he represents its restoration as his own work: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."§ In both passages, the resurrection is attributed to him, because his power was exerted in this, as it is in other external acts, in concurrence with that of his Father; for as they are one in nature, they are united in operation; "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."|| But it is the Father who is usually represented as the agent in this event; and this is so frequently done, that it is unnecessary to refer to particular passages. According to the order established in the plan of redemption, the resurrection was not properly the work of the Son, but of the Father. Jesus died in obedience to his will; he offered himself upon the cross, to appease his justice; and, to speak in the figurative style which has been employed on this subject, as he had engaged, in the character of our surety, to pay the debt which we owed to God, it was fit and necessary that, from the hand of God, he should openly receive a discharge.

I observe, in the last place, that he was raised on the third day after his death. This was the time fixed by himself, and it was so well known, that his enemies were apprised of it. "Sir," the Jews said to Pilate, "we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again."¶ He died on the afternoon of Friday, and was buried before sunset, when the day ended according to the Jewish reckoning. This was the

\* Rom. i. 4.    † Heb. xiii. 20.    ‡ John x. 18.    § Ib. ii. 19.    || Ib. v. 17.

¶ Matt. xxvii. 63.



first day. At sunset the Jewish Sabbath commenced, during the whole of which he rested in the grave. This is the second day. When the sun set again, the third day commenced. On the ensuing morning, most probably between the dawn and sunrise, the soul of our Redeemer was re-united to his body, and he left the sepulchre of Joseph, the glorious conqueror of the king of terrors. It is common, in ordinary conversation, when we do not attend to logical accuracy, to put a whole day for only a part of it. According to this mode of speaking, Christ was three days in the grave. It would seem, that a revolution of the earth around its axis, which we call a day, the Jews sometimes called a day and a night. Retaining this form of expression, they would say of an event which took up a part of three days, that it was three days and three nights in accomplishing. It is in this way that we reconcile with the fact our Lord's own assertion, that "as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so should the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."\* He used the language of his country; and his words were fulfilled, although he was not more than six or seven and thirty hours in the sepulchre, because these hours were made up of one whole day, and parts of two of those divisions of time, which the Jews called a day and a night. The time was long enough to show that he was really dead, but not so long as to permit his disciples to sink into despair. Their dejection was great, and their hopes were ready to expire, when he appeared to them, and turned their sorrow into joy: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."†

But how do we know that Jesus Christ rose from the dead? The fact is denied by the Jews, and by infidels. Do we, who believe it, follow a cunningly devised fable, or does our faith rest upon a solid foundation? Persisting as we do, in maintaining the fact in the face of opposition, we should be able to give a reason of our hope to every man who asks us. We find an account of the resurrection in the Scriptures; but how do we know it to be true? on what grounds do we give credit to it? and what are the arguments by which we can demonstrate the reasonableness of our own faith, and repel the objections and cavils of unbelievers? I shall endeavour to lay before you a summary of the evidence upon which this important article of our religion depends.

First, The fact that the body of Jesus, which had been deposited in the sepulchre of Joseph, was missing, is undisputed. It has been acknowledged by all classes of men, by enemies as well as by friends, that by some means it was removed. Had it been in the power of the Jews to show it after the third day, the report of his resurrection would not have obtained circulation; or if it had gone abroad among the credulous vulgar, who remembered his prediction, it would have been instantly quashed. The story which was contrived to prevent the people from believing it, and which will be afterwards considered, was a confession that the body could not be found. This is the first step in the proof. Jesus, having been taken down from the cross, was buried, but when the sepulchre was examined on the third day, it was empty.

In the second place, The body was not carried away by the disciples. They were so alarmed and terrified when they saw him seized by the emissaries of the priests and rulers, that they cannot be conceived to have engaged in such an enterprise, which was manifestly full of danger; for it would be absurd to suppose that their fears had been allayed by his death, which was obviously calculated to increase them. But although, from some unaccountable cause, they had resumed their courage, and become bold at a moment when other men would have sunk into absolute despondency, the thing itself was impos-

\* Matt. xii. 40.

† John xx. 20.

sible, because the sepulchre was strictly guarded by a band of soldiers, whom the unarmed disciples, unaccustomed to violence and blood, would not have ventured to encounter; not to say that forcible means would have completely defeated their design, even if they had been successful, as it would then have been known that there had not been a resurrection, but merely a removal of the body by his friends. To evade the argument from the disappearance of the body, notwithstanding the guard upon the sepulchre, the Jews industriously circulated a report that it was stolen by the disciples while the soldiers were asleep. Nothing, however, is more improbable than that a whole guard of soldiers should be asleep at their post, and especially of Roman soldiers, who were under the strictest discipline, knew that a severe punishment awaited them if they should neglect their duty, and in the present case, had received particular orders to be vigilant. In these circumstances, it is incredible that they should have all fallen asleep, and slept so soundly as not to be awakened by the rolling of the stone which closed the door of the sepulchre, and to give an opportunity to the disciples to accomplish their design in the most deliberate manner; for the body was not carried away in haste, but was stripped of the grave clothes, which were not scattered up and down, but regularly deposited in the tomb. The soldiers had not endured any uncommon fatigue by which they might have been overpowered. The watch had continued only about thirty-six hours; and during that period the guard had no doubt been changed. The story clumsily contrived by the Jewish rulers, contains internal evidence of falsehood. It makes the soldiers confess that they were asleep, and at the same time affirm what they could only have known if they had been awake. If all their senses were closed, how could they know that the disciples had stolen the body? For aught that they could tell, the theft had been committed by some other persons. How could they know that it had been stolen at all? The only fact which they were competent to attest, if they were really asleep, was, that when they awoke, the stone was rolled away and the body was gone. Whether it had been restored to life and had removed itself, or had been removed by the agency of others, they were manifestly unqualified to say. The story therefore, although that part of it had been true, which supposed the soldiers to be asleep, proves nothing against the solemn declaration of the disciples, that their Master was raised by the power of God.

In the third place, Although it had been possible for the disciples to remove the body of our Saviour, we cannot conceive what should have induced them to make the attempt. The transference of his body from one place to another would not have restored him to life; and if he had continued under the power of death, it was of no importance to them in what spot his mortal remains were deposited. No place would have been more honourable than the sepulchre of Joseph. He was no longer their master, he was not the Son of God, he was not the messiah. He had excited hopes which he was not able to realize; he had completely deceived them, and was no more worthy of their attention. Why should they have put themselves to any trouble, or have exposed themselves to any danger on his account? Why should they have incurred the risk of being detected and punished by the Jews? It appears from the evangelical history, that the intention of taking him away had never entered into their minds. Several women visited the sepulchre early in the morning of the third day, when the Sabbath was past; but they came to weep over the body of their Lord, and to lay new spices upon it; and when they found that the body was not there, they were thrown into the greatest distress, considering its removal, perhaps, as the deed of his enemies, who envied him this honourable tomb. "Sir," said one of them to Jesus himself, whom in



her confusion she supposed to be the gardener, "if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."\*

In the fourth place, If Jesus did not rise from the dead, and the whole was a fraud contrived by the disciples to save themselves from the reproach of having been the dupes of an impostor, it is astonishing that it was never discovered. It is astonishing that a few simple and uneducated men should have been able to devise and execute a plan, which has eluded all search, and has obtained credit among the wise and learned, as well as among the vulgar, for the space of eighteen hundred years. No person is able to produce a similar instance. How has it happened that the secret has not transpired? Was there no Judas among the disciples, who would go and tell the chief priests and rulers all that he knew? Was there not one honest man among them, who was compelled by his conscience to make a disclosure for the glory of God and the best interests of mankind? The disciples were strictly examined, and punished for preaching the resurrection, and threatened with severer treatment if they would not be silent; but they persisted in their original testimony. No flaw was ever discovered in the evidence, no contradiction, no hesitation. There was a boldness in their manner which confounded their adversaries, who, unable to refute their allegations, were compelled to supply the want of argument by violence and intimidation. Is this the character of false witnesses? Nay, there were traitors among them, men whom the fear of suffering and the love of the world prevailed upon to apostatise from the gospel; but not one of them was able to reveal a single circumstance, tending to impeach the truth of the resurrection. Had any such discovery been made, it would have been triumphantly published to check the progress of Christianity; but not a surmise of this kind is found in the records of antiquity. Many slanderous reports against the followers of Jesus were propagated; but there is not so much as a hint that the secret had been blabbed out, and the story of the resurrection had been proved to be an imposture.

In the fifth place, If Christ did not rise from the dead, it is impossible to account for the conduct of his disciples, who endeavoured to persuade the world that he had risen. Men, we know, may be very zealous in propagating a false opinion, which they themselves believe; there have been martyrs for error, as well as for truth. But who ever heard of a set of men, who devoted their time and talents, and exposed their life to hazard, with a view to establish a fact, of the falsity of which they were fully convinced? If Christ did not rise from the dead, the disciples knew that the story of his resurrection was an invention of their own. Why should they have been anxious to make others believe it? It appears, from what was formerly said, that it could not be from regard to their Master. The attachment to him, which they felt during his life, could not continue after his death, which had terminated his projects and their hopes, and proved irresistibly that in whatever way his miracles might be accounted for, he was not the Messiah. The natural tendency of this discovery, and of their bitter disappointment, was, by a violent revolution, to turn their former love into fixed hatred, and, when the first emotions of surprise and shame were over, to make them the loudest in exclaiming against the deception which he had practised upon them. It could not be from a wish to support their own credit by perpetuating the imposture, for how could they expect to succeed in their design? Was the authority of fishermen and publicans so great, that their countrymen would be persuaded by their simple affirmation, of so great a miracle as the restoration of a dead body to life? Mankind are not commonly so credulous; and, in the present case, they were the less ready to give their assent upon insufficient evidence, because

\* John xx. 15

they were strongly prejudiced against our Saviour, on account of his humble appearance and his ignominious sufferings, which were at variance with all their ideas of the character and state of the messiah. It could not be from the expectation of worldly advantages, of which there was no prospect. Wealth and honours could not be looked for, till they had gained a number of proselytes; and no man in his senses could have calculated on a single proselyte, except among the dregs of the people, to a cause so unpopular in itself, and supported by advocates so ill qualified to recommend it. Toil, and reproach, and perils, and death, stared them in the face. The world would rise up in arms against them. They would be derided and despised by the Gentiles, to whom the resurrection of the body seemed incredible and impossible. They would be persecuted by the Jews, who would transfer their hatred from Jesus himself, to those who were endeavouring to rescue his name from infamy, and to uphold the error which they were so eager to crush. In the absence of all the usual motives of action, we must attribute their conduct to a full conviction of the fact, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."\*

In the sixth place, Since it must be admitted, that there is no evidence of a design, on the part of the apostles, to impose upon the world by a fabricated story, it may be insinuated, that they were themselves deceived by the power of imagination, which, it is known, has sometimes subjected individuals to the most extraordinary delusions. They have fancied that they distinctly saw objects, which were mere phantoms of the brain. But there is not a single circumstance, in the present case, which will authorise us to account, in this way, for the conduct of the disciples. Their minds were not in that state of eager expectation which is favourable to the workings of fancy; for it appears that they were not looking for his resurrection, both from the visit of the women to the sepulchre, to see his body, and to lay fresh spices upon it, as if it had been to continue in the state of the dead; and from the incredulity of the rest, to whom, when they told them that he had risen, their words seemed as "idle tales."† The two disciples, on the road to Emmaus, expressed themselves in the language of despondency, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel;"‡ and, although they added, that some women who had been at the sepulchre, had reported that he was risen, they appear not to have believed them. In such a state of mind, there was no room for imagination to operate. It will be still more evident that they were not misled by it, if we consider that the appearances of Christ were frequent, not less than eight being recorded; besides, that many more may be supposed during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension; that some of them were made, not to a solitary individual, but to several of the disciples in company,—in one instance, to five hundred, who could not all be deceived; that the appearances were not transient, but lasted for a considerable time, so that the spectators had full leisure to examine them; that, while some of them were sudden, or without warning, others were the consequence of previous appointment; that they took place, for the most part at least, not in the night, when the mind is more subject to illusion, but in the day, when the disciples were composed, and their senses were awake; and, that the interviews were not distant and silent, but intimate and familiar,—Jesus having mingled with his followers, conversed freely with them, and gave them all the satisfaction which the most incredulous could demand, saying to one of them in particular, who was slow in giving his assent, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing."§ When all these circumstances are considered, we

\* Acts iv. 20.

† Luke xxiv. 11.

‡ Ib. 21.

§ John xx. 27.



may pronounce it to have been impossible that they should be deceived. The supposition, indeed, is so palpably absurd, that it would hardly be worth while to reason with a person who should seriously maintain it.

In the last place, To these arguments for the resurrection of Christ, founded on the competency and honesty of the apostles as witnesses, we may add the success of their preaching, which is inexplicable on any other hypothesis but the truth of their testimony. To what cause was it owing, that multitudes of Jews and Gentiles gave credit to their report, acknowledged a crucified man to be a Divine Person, and the Saviour of the world; embraced his religion, with its humiliating doctrines and holy discipline, made a sacrifice of ease, and honour, and life, in his service, and trusted in the promises of one whom they had never seen, for a recompense in the world to come? The apostles had no personal authority to overcome those whom they addressed; no learning to mislead, or eloquence to persuade them; no rewards to tempt their cupidity; no punishments to inflict on the incredulous. As men, they were contemptible in the eyes of the world; and the doctrine which they taught had no charms which might atone for the defects of the publishers. It is unnecessary to speak of their success, because it is universally acknowledged. They effected a mighty revolution in the state of human affairs, and established a religion which superceded all the ancient systems, and has been professed, for seventeen centuries, by all the enlightened nations of the earth. Every effect must have an adequate cause. The first missionaries of Christianity possessed no natural means of insuring its reception; they must, therefore, have been assisted by supernatural power. Unless they had been able to bring forward to view a higher authority than their own, the world would not have listened to them.

Now, the only way in which this could be done, was by the performance of such miracles as are ascribed to them in the New Testament; works evidently exceeding human ability, and wrought by the immediate interposition of Heaven. If a man should come and publish a new religion, and at the same time should give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and the use of their limbs to the lame, and life to the dead, we should be authorised to conclude that it was not an invention of his own, but was a revelation from the Lord of Nature, who alone could controul its laws. The apostles were invested with the power of working miracles. Their Master had therefore risen from the dead, for they performed the miracles in his name, or referred to him as their author; and, consequently, he was alive, and had supernatural gifts at his disposal.

It is astonishing that any person who saw diseases cured, and demons dispossessed, by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, should have refused to give credit to the report of his resurrection. Yet we know that there were men so obstinate in unbelief; and there is proof in the Scriptures, that the evidence of miracles is not irresistible. We must therefore proceed a step farther in accounting for the success of the disciples, in prevailing upon mankind to believe in their crucified Master. We must acknowledge an exertion of Divine power, in working internal as well as external miracles; in subduing their prejudices, fixing their attention seriously upon the subject, and disposing them to give their assent to the fact, notwithstanding the painful sacrifices which their conversion might require. We are thus presented with a new proof of the resurrection of Christ. If he had been in the state of the dead, he could have employed no power in favour of his religion. He could not have sent the Spirit, "to convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."<sup>\*</sup> The general success of the gospel, which, extending beyond

<sup>\*</sup> John xvi. 8.

the limits of Judea, established itself throughout the Roman empire, and among nations which never submitted to its sway, and its effects in our own age, upon individuals whom it sanctifies, and inspires with peace and hope of immortality, furnish satisfactory evidence that the apostles spake the words of truth and soberness, when they confidently affirmed that their Lord, having been crucified and buried, rose again on the third day, and showed himself alive by many infallible proofs. "We are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to those that obey him."\*

It has been said, that if Christ really rose from the dead, he should have shown himself to the priests and rulers of the Jews, that they might be convinced, and become witnesses of the fact. Their testimony, it is insinuated, would have had much greater weight than that of his disciples, being the testimony of enemies. This objection is not worthy of much attention. It is a demand for a degree of evidence which has not been given, and it would be of force only if the evidence which has been given were defective. But if it is sufficient, it is plain that the demand is capricious and unreasonable, and, consequently, that its being withheld affords no ground of suspicion or complaint, and will not excuse the unbelief of those who deny this fundamental article of our holy religion.

Had Jesus appeared to the priests and rulers of the Jews, they would either have acknowledged him to be the messiah, or they would have persisted in rejecting him. If they had not believed in him, the evidence, instead of being strengthened, would have been weakened; for it would then have been triumphantly said, that, although a few obscure and illiterate persons had been deceived by the artifice of his followers, others were more sagacious, had examined the matter with greater care, and had discovered it to be an imposture. We should have been told by infidels, that the pretended resurrection was a trick of the disciples; that it was a different person whom they endeavoured to pass off as their Master returned from the grave; and that the cheat had been found out by the great men of Judea, whom they would have adorned with the high-sounding titles of learned, prudent, and intelligent. It is obvious that, although their unbelief might not have entirely invalidated the evidence, it would have encumbered it with difficulties, which might have greatly disquieted our minds. If, on the other hand, they had believed in Christ, it does not follow that the evidence would have acquired additional strength. Consider how, upon this supposition, the matter would have stood. Instead of a few witnesses, we should have had many; the whole Jewish nation, or the greater part of it, instead of five hundred disciples. But the value of the testimony is to be estimated by the character, not by the number of the witnesses. At present, we have a competent number of persons, who delivered their testimony in such circumstances as afford security for its truth; in the presence of enemies, who possessed the means of detection, if there was any fraud, and in the face of the most formidable opposition, and who sealed it with their blood. If the whole Jewish nation had been converted, we should have been deprived of these proofs of veracity. There would have been no trial of the witnesses, no conflict of opinion, no parties to watch each other's proceedings; the voice of the nation would have been unanimous; but for this reason it would not have been so convincing, because it might have been alleged, and infidels would not have failed to bring forward the objection, that it was a contrivance of the Jews, who were ready to give credit to any story which seemed to realise their hopes of the messiah. We should have heard them loaded with abuse, as an illiterate, credulous, superstitious people, whose testimony was utterly unworthy of attention. The story, it

\* Acts v. 32.



would have been said, was promulgated where it was sure to be received, and no person had power or inclination to detect it. You will all agree with me, I trust, that the evidence, as it stands, is more conclusive than it would have been if the proposal of infidels had been complied with. I shall only add, that it is not made by them from a wish that Jesus had appeared to his enemies, and thus furnished irresistible demonstration of the truth of his religion, but with a design to prove that this want destroys all the other evidence, and that the story of the resurrection is a fable.

There is an objection against the resurrection of our Saviour, founded on the narrative of the Evangelist John, which, however, is hardly worthy of notice, and may be speedily dismissed. He relates that, on two occasions when the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood in the midst of the disciples.\* As one solid substance cannot pass through another solid substance without dividing it, either what John relates did not happen, and consequently the narrative is false, or Christ did not appear in a real body, and it was only a phantom which the disciples saw. The simple answer to this trifling objection is, that, although the evangelist plainly signifies that he entered in a miraculous manner, he does not determine the nature of the miracle. The doors were shut, and no doubt locked, for fear of the Jews; but Jesus might have opened them without being perceived. It is childish to cavil at a circumstance which can be so easily explained, especially as all the other facts of the narrative clearly show that the disciples believed that he was appearing in a true body, and that they fully ascertained the fact during their personal intercourse with him.

The resurrection of Christ vindicated his character from the aspersions of his enemies. It demonstrated, at the same time, that he had accomplished the work which his Father appointed him to perform, and had obtained eternal redemption for his people. It gives an assurance to those who believe in him, of a future triumph over death and the grave. He rose as their representative, and they shall also rise after his example, and through his merits and power. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."† We cannot more properly conclude this lecture than with the following words:—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."‡

\* John xx. 19, 26.

† 1 Cor. xv. 20—23.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 3—5.

## LECTURE LXII.

## CHRIST'S STATE OF EXALTATION.

Ascension of Christ; its Time; the Nature in which, and the Place to which, he ascended; its Witnesses, and his Attendants.—his Seat in Heaven, at "God's Right Hand."—Opinions respecting this Phrase.—It implies the possession of supreme Honour, Felicity, and Power.

JESUS CHRIST having finished the work assigned to him by his Father, it was not necessary that he should prolong his stay upon earth. It was rather necessary that he should leave it in order to perform those benevolent offices by which the benefits of his humiliation and death would be communicated to his followers; and, in particular, to make way for the coming of another Divine Person, not in a visible form, but in a powerful dispensation of light and holiness, and consolation. "But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."\* Accordingly, we read, that after he had given all necessary instructions to his disciples, he led them forth to Bethany, where he was parted from them, and received up into heaven.

First, The ascension took place forty days after his resurrection. "To the apostles," Luke says, "he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven."† During this interval, he denied himself the full possession of his glorious reward, for the benefit of his disciples, and of the world, to whom they were to minister. The instruction which he imparted to them, they greatly needed, and it was adapted to their present circumstances. From the opportunities which they enjoyed of hearing his public discourses, and conversing with him in private, they had undoubtedly derived much advantage; but their progress was not such as it ought to have been. In consequence of the influence of the national prejudices upon their minds, although they were forewarned of his death, it came upon them by surprise and almost drove them to despair; so inconsistent was it with their preconceived notions of the character and work of the Messiah. It was necessary, therefore, to rectify their misconceptions, and to show them that his sufferings were an essential part of the plan which he had undertaken to execute; and that, although nothing was less expected by them, they had been expressly announced by the prophets. That he was thus employed in the interval between his resurrection and ascension, we are informed by the evangelists: "He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."‡ This exposition of the Scriptures was calculated to give relief to their minds, which, although comforted by the return of their Master from the grave, must have been perplexed

\* John xvi. 5—7.

† Acts i. 3.

‡ Luke xxiv. 44—46.



and confounded by the unexpected events which had befallen him. For this reason it was now given; but their full instruction in the nature of his kingdom, or of the new dispensation which he designed to establish, was deferred to the day of Pentecost, when, according to his promise, he sent the Spirit to lead them into all the truth. This was not the only reason why our Lord did not immediately return to heaven. He continued upon earth, to give his disciples a full opportunity to be assured of the truth of his resurrection, as they were to be the witnesses of it to the world. To qualify them for this office, it was necessary that he should not merely pay them a transient visit, lest unbelievers should have said, that they were deceived by the force of imagination; but that he should appear so often, and in such circumstances, as not to leave the slightest ground for suspicion or cavil. Accordingly, he showed himself not once only, but many times; not to separate individuals alone, but to several in company, and on one occasion, to more than five hundred persons; he conversed with them, allowed them to touch him, ate and drank with them. In any ordinary case, the evidence would have been deemed sufficient, even by the most sceptical, to establish the most important fact. So far therefore, as respects their opportunities of being acquainted with this fact, the testimony of the apostles cannot be reasonably called in question. They could all say, with the beloved disciple, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us."\*

Secondly, Our Lord ascended in human nature. The man Christ Jesus has left the earth, and entered into that invisible region of the universe where God sits on the throne of his Majesty. To his followers, it is a source of high consolation to know, that he has not laid aside their nature, but retains it amidst his glory; because they can look up to him with confidence, in the full assurance of his sympathy, and see, in his exaltation, an earnest of their future glory. But this is not the principal idea to which I request your attention. The point to be considered at present is, that it was solely in human nature that he ascended to heaven; or that, like his death, burial, and resurrection, the ascension can be predicated of him only as a man. As God, he could neither descend nor ascend, because his Divine essence, filling heaven and earth, cannot change its place, and does not admit of that exaltation, or that accession of glory which the ascension implies. It is acknowledged, indeed, that his divine glory, which, during his residence among mortals, had been concealed, was then unveiled, although even this concession requires to be explained, to make it consistent with truth; the obscurity and manifestation of his glory properly referring to his human nature, and to men, not to the inhabitants of heaven, in whose eyes it always shone with undiminished lustre. But because, in a certain sense, it may be said to have been revealed when he ascended, some have maintained, that the ascension may be considered as relative to his divine nature, as well as his human. But, in doing so, they are chargeable, when speaking of a plain fact, with substituting figurative for literal language, and thus confounding two things, which are distinct, and should be carefully separated. The subject of discussion at present is, not a change of state, but a change of place, which was competent to that nature alone, which, being finite, could exist only in a certain portion of space, and might be at one time on earth, and at another in heaven. The words of our Lord are worthy of attention: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven."\* There is an appa-

\* 1 John i. 1—3

† John iii. 13.

rent confusion and contradiction in this passage; and, had it related to any other person, it might have been pronounced to be unintelligible. Of the Son of man it is said, that he has come down from heaven, and yet was in heaven. To those who are convinced of his Divinity, the passage presents no difficulty. His two natures being personally united, that is justly affirmed of the one, which is strictly true only of the other. The existence of his human nature commenced upon earth, and it had never been in heaven; for the opinion of the elder Socinians, that he was taken up to it before he entered upon his ministry, to be instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, is a dream, or a dishonest figment, devised with a view to evade the evidence, arising from this and other passages, of his pre-existence and divinity; but he had come down from it, by the manifestation of himself in human flesh, yet was still in it, by the immensity of his essence. Of a literal change of place, as God, he was incapable; it was in his assumed nature, that he who had first descended, afterwards ascended, "that he might fill all things," heaven with his glory, and the earth with the blessings of his grace.

Thirdly, The place to which he ascended was heaven, as the Scriptures declare, in many passages. One apostle affirms, that he ascended "above all heavens;" but his meaning is ascertained by a reference to the prevailing opinion of his age. According to the system of the Jews, there were three heavens;—the aerial heaven, which is the region of clouds and meteors; the starry heaven, in which the celestial luminaries are fixed; and the heaven of heavens, in which the throne of God is erected. Our Redeemer ascended above the two former, or the visible heavens, and entered into the latter, which is concealed from mortal eyes by an impenetrable veil. Where the highest heaven is seated we cannot tell; but, agreeably to an idea which seems to be natural because it is common, it is said to be above us; and hence his passage to it from this world is called an ascent: It is the place in which the glory of God, which is partially seen in his works, is fully revealed, angels and the departed spirits of the just at present reside, and the redeemed, after the resurrection, will have their everlasting habitation.

Heaven may be considered under the two different notions of a palace and a temple. In the one view it is the seat of power and majesty, in the other it is the place of solemn worship. Into heaven, considered as a palace, Jesus entered in the character of a king, who, having vanquished his enemies, and established his title to the crown, went to take possession of his kingdom. To this event the following passage is applicable, although, in the first instance, it may be understood to have referred to the entrance of the ark into the tabernacle: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."\* Into heaven considered as a temple, he entered in the character of a priest; and his ascension was prefigured by the entrance of Aaron, and his successors in office, into the most holy place, to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifices, and to burn incense before the mercy-seat. The first and fundamental duty of the priesthood he performed upon earth, by offering that immaculate and invaluable sacrifice, which appeased divine justice, and obtained eternal redemption for his people; it remained to plead the merits of his death, and obtain, by his intercession, the blessings for which he had paid the price of his blood. For this purpose he ascended, as we are informed by an apostle in the following words: "Christ is not entered into the holy places

\* Ps. xxiv. 7—10.



made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us.”\*

Fourthly, The witnesses of his ascension were his disciples, whom he had assembled for this purpose. We are not informed, how many of them were together at this time. On one occasion he was seen by more than five hundred brethren; but whether it was at his ascension, or when he met with his followers in Galilee, we cannot certainly say. But although we should suppose, what, however, is not very probable, that none were present but the twelve apostles, the number was more than sufficient to attest the fact. They were witnesses qualified in every respect; and as their testimony would be readily received by the other disciples, who had full confidence in their veracity, so it is entitled to credit among all other men, confirmed as it is by miracles, which they performed by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, whom their master promised to give them after his ascension, and whom he did actually send on the day of Pentecost. Jesus did not withdraw secretly from our world, lest it should have been said by unbelievers, that we know not what is become of him, and there is no reason why we should take any farther concern in him. As his entrance, although obscure in respect of his parentage, and the place where he first saw the light, was illustrated by a vision of angels, who proclaimed it to the shepherds of Bethlehem; so his departure, although unknown to the great men of Jerusalem, and the inhabitants in general, was an object of attention to his chosen friends. It might have been afterwards revealed to them by the Spirit, who instructed them in many other secret things; but the importance of the fact required, that it should take place in such a manner as to be attested by ocular witnesses. It appears that he was not carried away by a sudden rapture, but slowly rose from the earth, and that the disciples had leisure to follow him with their eyes, till he had ascended to a considerable height, when a cloud received him out of their sight, or intervened between him and the earth. Their wistful looks were fixed upon the spot, where they had caught the last glimpse of their beloved Master; and they would have stood in the same posture, till night had enveloped the heavens in its shade, in the vain expectation of seeing him again, had not two angels appeared to them and said, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”†

The place from which he ascended was the Mount of Olives, and in the vicinity of Bethany. Gethsemane was also on the Mount of Olives. On this coincidence it has been remarked, that the place was chosen, that as he had there given a proof of human weakness, while he endured the wrath of his Father, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground, so he might there, by rising to heaven, display the power and glory of his divinity; that his exaltation might commence on the same spot where he had been in the lowest state of abasement and sorrow; and that from the scene in which he had struggled with the powers of darkness, he might soar above principalities and powers. And hence, it has been said, we should learn that we are not to expect a triumph, till we have encountered the toils and perils of the contest, and that we should not despair of obtaining the kingdom when our warfare is accomplished. These are pious reflections; but their solidity depends upon the fact, that he ascended from the very spot which had witnessed his agony. Of this, however, we have no certainty. The Mount of Olives was of some extent; and for aught that we can tell, the place of the ascension might be at a considerable distance from Gethsemane. If this should be the

\* Heb. ix. 24.

† Acts i. 11.

truth, the reflections founded on the presumed identity of the places, however good in themselves, must be classed with many other suggestions of fancy.

Our Lord was attended at his ascension by the glorious inhabitants of heaven. Only two of them, according to the Scriptures, were seen; but we have reason to believe, that thousands were present, although invisible to human eyes: "The chariots of God," says the Psalmist, "are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."\* They were present not like the Roman soldiers, who followed their victorious general as having a share in his triumph, because by their valour his battles had been won; but, to add to the splendour of the scene, and to celebrate his mighty achievements. The thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers of heaven, were put in subjection to him; and they came, on this occasion, to do homage to their Lord, and to swell his train when he took possession of his kingdom.

His leading captivity captive when he ascended, denotes his triumph over the infernal powers. They who had made men captives by their successful stratagems, saw the spoils wrested from their hands, and were themselves made captives by our Almighty Redeemer. Whether they were compelled to be present, and were exhibited as vanquished foes, disgraced and ruined, and reserved to everlasting punishment, we are not warranted by a single expression, of which no explanation is given, to affirm. There is no doubt that our Saviour triumphed over them while he ascended; that in his exaltation to the throne of heaven, they beheld a fearful presage of the final overthrow of their kingdom.

Let us now proceed to consider what followed the ascension of Christ: "So then," says the Evangelist Mark, "after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."†

Every person is sensible that this language is figurative. Neither the right hand of God, nor the posture ascribed to our Saviour, can be literally understood. God is a pure Spirit, and has no bodily members. The Scriptures expressly forbid us to make any visible representations of him, because they must be false and degrading; and the Israelites were particularly reminded, that, in the day God spoke to their fathers, they saw no similitude. When mention, therefore, is made of the eyes, the ears, the feet, and the hands of God, it is evident that we ought to explain them in consistency with the spirituality of his essence, and to consider them as metaphors, employed to assist us in conceiving his perfections and operations. Hence, although our Redeemer, in his state of exaltation, has a material body, which is capable of corporeal actions and postures, it requires little reflection to perceive that "his sitting" is figurative, as well as "the right hand," at which he is said to sit. We are as ignorant of the nature and employments of glorified bodies, as we are of the nature and employments of spirits. Besides, the Scriptures are not uniform with respect to the posture which they assign to our Redeemer; for as at one time he is said to sit, he is at another said to stand, at the right hand of God. We are, therefore, under the necessity of supposing, that their design is not to fix our attention upon the posture itself, but upon the state of which it is expressive. Instead, then, of inquiring separately, what is meant by the right hand of God, and what by sitting at it, I shall consider them conjunctly, and point out their united import.

Before I proceed, however, I shall make a remark or two upon the other posture which is sometimes assigned to him. When the blessed martyr Ste-

\* Ps. lxxviii. 17, 18.

† Mark xvi 19.



phen was surrounded by his infuriated enemies, being full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw Jesus "standing at the right hand of God."\* If you bear in mind that it is not the posture, but the state, which, in both cases, should be considered, you will perceive that the different representations are not contradictory. Sitting is the posture of a sovereign, or a judge, or a person who has finished his labours, and is enjoying ease; standing is the posture of a man who waits to receive a friend, or is prepared to defend him. On the present occasion, when a holy man was undergoing a dreadful trial of his faith, Jesus rose, if we may speak so, from his throne to send to him the necessary succours of his grace, to meet and welcome his spirit as soon as it should escape from its persecutors, and to introduce him into the presence of his Father, that he might receive from his hand the recompense of an unfading crown. To Stephen the sight was consoling. It sustained his courage amidst the terrors of a violent death, and enabled him to resign his mortal life in the joyful hope of a better: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Having subjoined another petition for his murderers, "he fell asleep."

There is scarcely a doctrine or fact in Scripture, which folly or malignity has not perverted, when it happened to stand in the way of some favourite opinion. The sitting of Christ at the right hand of God, instead of being considered as expressive of his exaltation, has been converted into a proof of his inferiority to the Father, because the left hand was the place of honour, as the abettors of this notion endeavour to show by quotations from ancient writers. It might be said to such men, that, as our Saviour ascended to heaven in the character of mediator, nothing is gained by proving his inferiority to the Father in that character; for we readily acknowledge it, but at the same time maintain, that it is not inconsistent with his essential equality. But the argument on which they found their conclusion is false. Whatever may have been the practice of some other nations, as the Scriptures were written by Jews, and addressed to them in the first instance, it is by their usages that we must explain this expression, and others of a similar nature. Now, among them the right hand was the place of honour. "The man of God's right hand,"† is the man whom God delights to honour. "A wise man's heart" is said to be "at his right hand," because he engages in honourable pursuits; but "a fool's heart" to be "at his left" hand, because he acts imprudently and shamefully.‡ When Joseph presented his two sons to his father, he set the elder on his right hand and the younger on his left; but Jacob, to show his preference of the younger, laid his right hand on his head.§ Nothing is more decisive of the point, than the order in which men will be arranged on the day of judgment, when "some shall awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt;" for then the judge will set the former on his right hand, and the latter on his left. Enough has been said to expose this abortive attempt to wrest the expression which we are now considering, to serve the purposes of a party.||

There is another opinion still more strange, that Christ's sitting at the right hand of God, denotes that, in a certain sense, he is higher than the Father. It is so extravagant, and in fact so unintelligible, that it would be a waste of time to attempt to refute it. He is superior, it is said, to the Father, not in reality, but in the administration of his kingdom. It is sufficient to oppose to this impious assertion the words of an apostle; "The Father hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him."¶

\* Acts vii. 55.

† Ps. lxxx. 17.

‡ Ecc. x. 2.

§ Gen. xlviii. 14.

|| Vide Witsius, in *Symb. Apost. Exer.* xxi. § 5.

¶ 1 Cor. xv. 27.

The right hand is the place of honour. It is so esteemed among us, and was so accounted by the Jews. When Solomon's mother came to him, "he sat down upon his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand."\* It is implied, therefore, in the position assigned to our Saviour in heaven, that he is invested with great dignity and glory. I showed, in the former part of this Lecture, that the ascension related solely to his human nature, because his Divine was incapable of change of place, being always in heaven as well as upon earth. I now observe, that it was equally incapable of any accession of glory, because it was already infinitely glorious, in the possession of all possible perfection. But its glory was veiled during his humiliation, and only a few rays of it were seen in the miraculous works which he performed, and the sublime doctrines which he published. As the sun, having scattered the clouds which covered his face, pours his bright effulgence upon the earth, so our Redeemer, upon his exaltation to heaven, appeared in all the majesty of his character, and showed to all its blessed inhabitants, that the Son of man is also the Son of God, and the equal of the Father. To this manifestation of his original dignity, after the temporary obscurity which it had suffered, these words of his intercessory prayer may be referred: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."†

But there was honour conferred upon our Saviour in human nature, and in the character of Mediator; and to this there is a particular reference, when he is said to be seated at the right hand of God. It is elevated above men and angels; it is the highest of the works of God. Even in its state of humiliation, its powers surpassed those of the most richly gifted creature; no wisdom, for example, equal to that which he displayed, being found among the inhabitants of heaven; and now, we may presume, its faculties are expanded to the utmost limit of which they are susceptible. Of the external glory of his human nature, we can form no idea, because we have received no information on the subject; but this we may venture to say, that in him is displayed the perfection of majesty and beauty. His appearance to John, in the isle of Patmos, was awful and majestic, but, partly at least, symbolical, like the visions of the prophets. On the mount of transfiguration, his countenance shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. Without entering into particulars, the Scriptures declare that his body is glorious, and is the pattern according to which the bodies of the saints will be fashioned. It is not inconsistent with the ascription of transcendent honour to him, that he promises to give his saints to sit down with him upon his throne. They will share in his glory, but not in equal measure; their glory will be similar, but not in the same degree. He is "the first-born among many brethren;"‡ entitled to a double portion; the heir and the lord of the family. Hence, notwithstanding their elevation, they will acknowledge him as their superior, and do him homage. While the angels adore him, the saints will cast down their crowns before his throne, and both will join in expressions of admiration, and gratitude, and praise. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."§ It is unnecessary to refer to a distinction formerly made, and to remark, that he is not the object of worship as man, nor properly as Mediator; because, as he is in this character the servant of the Father, so it is by him that our prayers

\* 1 Kings ii. 19.

† John xvii. 5.

‡ Rom. viii. 29.

§ Rev. v. 11, 12.



and praises are presented. It is enough to know, that it is the incarnate God who is worshipped by the heavenly congregation, and that, although the foundation of this worship is the divine perfections of which he is possessed, the great motive to it is his redeeming love, and it is addressed to him without distinction of natures. "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour."\*

But this is not the only idea suggested by his sitting at the right hand of God. It imports the possession of happiness; but whether this idea is founded, as some suppose, on the fact that gifts are usually conferred by the right hand, or is derived from some other source, it is not material to inquire. That the expression admits of this sense, is evident from the following passage: "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."† It is to be particularly noticed, that these words are spoken by the Messiah, and with a view to his exaltation. They follow the declaration of his confident hope, that God "would not leave his soul in hell, nor suffer him to see corruption, but would show him the path of life," or raise him from the grave.

For the joy which was set before him he endured the cross, and despised the shame; and he has now entered into it. Sitting at the right hand of God, he is nearer to him than any man or angel; and his nearness implies not only a closer relation, resulting from the union of his human nature to the divine, but also more intimate fellowship. The presence of God is a source of felicity. The place which we call heaven, would not be happier than the most desolate spot upon earth, if he did not there impart the fulness of his love; and a day in the sanctuary would not be preferable to a day of bodily rest at home, were it not the chosen scene on which he displays the wonders of his grace. The light of his countenance awakens emotions of joy in the souls of the righteous, with which the most intense sensations of worldly pleasure are not to be compared. If the meanest saint is destined to enjoy a degree of felicity which it has not entered into the human mind to conceive, what must be the communication of divine love to him, who is nearer to God than all the saints, is the object of his infinite approbation and delight, and has glorified him in the highest in the work of redemption! What shall be done to the man whom he delights to honour? The reward is proportioned to his merit, the height of his joy may be estimated by the depth of his previous sorrow. "The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness; thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in thy salvation; honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever; thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance."‡ While he partakes of all the pleasures which are at the right hand of God, he rejoices to reflect that his great undertaking is accomplished, to behold around him the fruits of his labours, and to know that in due time heaven will be filled with millions of the redeemed, who will for ever praise him as the author of their happiness. "He sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied."§

Again, the right hand is an emblem of power. This is the general idea which is suggested, when hands and arms are attributed to God, because it is with our arms and hands that we exert our strength. The right hand is most commonly used, and whatever cause may be assigned for this curious fact, is a more powerful instrument than the left hand. The sitting of our Saviour at the

\* Heb. ii. 9.

† Ps. xvi. 11.

‡ Ps. xxi. 1—6.

§ Is. liii. 11.

right hand of God, signifies on this account that he is exalted to authority and dominion. "Hereafter," he said to the Jewish council, "shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power."\*

The psalmist refers to the power of the Messiah in his state of exaltation in these words: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."† It was exhibited to Daniel in the night visions, when "he saw, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."‡ Our Saviour announced it to his disciples after his resurrection: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;"§ and Paul speaks thus of it in his epistle to the Philippians: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."|| There is a distinction to be observed between his essential and his mediatorial kingdom. The former he always possessed, and since it belonged to him as God the Creator of all things, he could not lay it aside even during his humiliation. The latter he received when he ascended; for although he had a right to it, when he rose from the dead, and therefore told his disciples, that it was already given to him, it was upon his entrance into heaven, that he sat down upon his throne. His mediatorial kingdom comprehends power to establish, and govern, and defend, and bestow eternal salvation upon his church, and power to render all other things subservient to its interests. He ought to be considered not only as the King of Zion, but as the Lord of the Universe. Hence, when we say that the world is under the government of God, we should reflect, that properly it is not the Father of whom we speak, except in this sense, that he always acts in concurrence with the Son; but that the declaration of our Saviour, that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son,"¶ is true of the whole administration of affairs. Our Redeemer holds the sceptre, and sways it over angels and men. He hath put all things under his feet.

There is one other idea connected with his sitting at the right hand of God, which it may be proper to mention, as it is suggested by the following contrast between him and the priests of the law: "Every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool."\*\* The posture of the legal priests imported that they were constantly engaged in the service of the altar, and, consequently, had not accomplished the design of their office, by the perfect reconciliation of the people to God. The high-priest never sat down in the most holy place, but having stood for some time before the mercy-seat, he retired to offer new sacrifices, and again to go the round of the sacred offices. But Jesus Christ, when he entered into heaven, sat down at the right hand of God, and is "a priest upon his throne." His posture signifies that his work is finished. His one oblation has satisfied the demands of justice, and his Father has testified his approbation of it, by conferring upon him honour and authority.

The present exaltation of Jesus Christ is a source of great consolation to

\* Matt. xxvi. 64.

† Phil. ii. 9—11.

‡ Ps. cx. 1.

§ John v. 22.

¶ Dan. vii. 13, 14.

\*\* Heb. x. 11—13.

§ Matt. xxviii. 18



his followers. It was not solely for his personal glory that he ascended, but also for the good of his people, in promoting which he employs all the interest and power which he possesses. His intercession ensures the acceptance of their duties, not as the condition of salvation, but as testimonies of their love to God, and their filial subjection to him. His government is calculated to tranquillize and comfort their minds amidst the vicissitudes of life. As they are assured that nothing can happen to themselves without his appointment, and that every word will be overruled for their final welfare, so they may look upon all the dangers in the world as under the control of his power, and the direction of his wisdom, as constituting parts of his plan, working for ends worthy of him, and subservient to the establishment of his kingdom. Affairs may not proceed in a train agreeable to our views and expectations; but it will repress every murmur and every wish for a different order, to reflect that he presides over them, who is the patron of truth and righteousness, and the faithful guardian of those who love him: "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad thereof."\*

The security of the church depends upon the exercise of the power with which Christ was invested at his ascension. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it, because it is defended by his omnipotent arm. It has been deemed a proof of Cæsar's greatness of mind, although, in truth, it proved nothing but his presumption and impiety, that he said to the sailors in a storm, "Fear not, this ship carries Cæsar;" as if the elements would have done homage to that ambitious spirit. The wind and waves did indeed respect him on that occasion, but only as they have since respected, and will always respect, the meanest and most worthless of mankind, whose hour is not come. The ocean will not swallow up those who are doomed to perish by the sword. But the church may assume the attitude and the language of confidence and defiance when she is menaced by the powers of earth and hell, because He is her protector, who can render their councils and efforts abortive, and scatter them with his breath: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."†

To him who is exalted above principalities and powers, profound reverence and prompt obedience are due. This is the command of the church: "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." We are under law to Jesus Christ; and as our consciences should recognise his authority, and bow to it, so it will render our obedience the homage of the heart, devoutly to remember, that his right to demand it is founded on the deep humiliation and exquisite sufferings to which he submitted for our salvation. Although we have not seen his glory with our eyes, as the beloved disciple did in the isle of Patmos, yet, being admitted to contemplate it through the medium of revelation, which gives such descriptions of it as are fitted to excite mingled emotions of reverence and confidence, let us, like him, fall at his feet, and say with another saint, "Truly, we are thy servants; we are thy servants, thou hast loosed our bonds: we will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord."‡

\* Ps. xcvi. 1.

† Ps. xlv. 1, 2.

‡ Ps. cxvi. 16, 17.

## LECTURE LXIII.

## CHRIST'S STATE OF EXALTATION.

The General Judgment, a Doctrine of Revelation—The Time and Duration of it—The Place of Judgment—The Parties—Christ the Judge: his Fitness for the Office—Circumstances of his appearing—Standards of Judgment—The Sentences, and their Execution.

“YE men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”\* These were the words of the two angels who appeared on Mount Olivet to the disciples, while they were wistfully looking after their Lord, who had ascended in their sight, and was now concealed by a cloud. He will come again at the appointed time; and it will be the purpose of his coming to close the administration which he is at present carrying on at the right hand of his Father, by the public distribution of rewards and punishments. To this consummating act of his royal authority, I shall, in this lecture, direct your attention.

In treating this subject, it is usual to bring forward arguments suggested by reason, in support of the declarations of Scripture respecting the future judgment of the human race. Were we to deny that justice is essential to the Supreme Governor of the universe, we should divest him of all moral excellence, and leave only those physical attributes which distinguish him from men, as almighty power, perpetual duration, and immensity of essence. We should transform him, whom even the heathens called Optimus Maximus, into the Arimanes of the Persians, a being of malignant dispositions, the author of darkness and confusion, and every evil work. But we find that, at present, justice is only partially exercised, and the common course of things is conducted without any marked regard to the character and actions of men. Those whom we call good, because their actions are conformable to moral distinctions, are often left to struggle with poverty, and to pine in affliction; while bold transgressors, men who set their mouths against the heavens, and give loose reins to their appetites and passions, not seldom enjoy outward peace, and pass their days amidst affluence, and a succession of delights. The exceptions serve the more clearly to illustrate the imperfection of the present system; to show us more distinctly what, in our apprehension, might be, and ought to be: and call more loudly for a different order of things. Human laws, which, in so far as they are just, may be considered as making a part of the moral administration of the universe, because they are sanctioned by Heaven, supply this defect in part, but only in part. Besides that, in general, they afford no reward to the obedient, but simple protection, there are innumerable cases of delinquency which they cannot reach, in consequence of the limited knowledge and power of those who execute them, and of other causes which obstruct the exercise of authority. Many crimes are secret, unknown to all but the guilty; and, of public crimes, the authors are not always discovered, or they escape from justice by flight, or they set it at defiance; or, what is worst of all, they find means to prevent it by bribery and perjury. What then is the result of this view of the state of human affairs? Shall we conclude, in opposition to the clear dictates of reason, and the consent of all nations,

\* Acts i. 11.



hat there is no God? Or shall we say, with some impious philosophers, that he is regardless of the actions of men; and that, instead of a wise and righteous Providence, blind fortune presides? Or rather, compelled by the best sentiments of our minds, which recognise a Deity, and invest him with every moral perfection, shall we not rest in this obvious inference, that, since justice is not at present fully displayed, another dispensation will follow, under which there will be an exact retribution; that a time will come when the wrongs of the injured shall be redressed, when the proud transgressors shall stoop to a superior power, when every work shall be brought into judgment, and every secret thing shall be revealed?

To this reasoning no person of candour will object, so far as it goes to prove a future retribution. If there is a just God, it must ultimately be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. Accordingly, a recompense in another state was expected by those who did not enjoy the benefit of Divine revelation, and the expectation was founded partly upon traditional authority, and partly also upon argument. They believed, that, when the souls of men left their bodies, they appeared before certain judges appointed to take cognizance of human actions, Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Æacus, who, after an impartial investigation, pronounced sentence upon them, and consigned them to the fields of bliss, or to the region of torment. But the judgment which the Gentiles anticipated at the close of their mortal course, was individual and private, like the sentence which Christians believe will be pronounced upon every man immediately after his death; and this is all that the reasoning proves. Divines, therefore, are chargeable with inaccuracy, when they employ it in support of the doctrine now under consideration, since it serves only to establish the fact, that men will be recompensed, not that they will be recompensed by a procedure carried on in the presence of assembled generations. Having convinced ourselves that God will render to every man according to his works, we can advance no farther by the light of reason than the heathens did, who held that men appeared individually before the infernal judges, or at most along with those who happened to arrive in the other world at the same time, and, that they were dismissed, without any farther solemnity, each to his proper place.

It is to revelation alone that we are indebted for the knowledge of a general judgment, in which the proceedings will take place in the sight of angels and men; the righteous and the wicked will be arranged in separate classes, and all will be witnesses of the Divine justice in the reward of the good, and the punishment of the bad. I shall content myself with a few passages in which it is announced. "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead."\* "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."† "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."‡

It may be thought that the ends of justice are answered when individuals are treated according to their desert, and as this is done immediately after death, that no further procedure is necessary. Justice, as it respects private persons, consists in regulating their conduct by its dictates, in their transactions with friends, neighbours, and mankind in general; and if they uniformly preserve inviolate the rights of others, all its demands are fulfilled. But the

\* Acts xvii. 31.

• † 2 Cor. v. 10.

‡ Matt. xxv. 31, 32.

justice of a governor belongs to the public, who claim not only that it should impartially execute the laws, but that it should be exercised in such a manner as is most conducive to the general interests. The rewards to which meritorious individuals are entitled ought not to be conferred, and the punishment which transgressors have incurred ought not to be inflicted, in silence and secrecy, but both should be openly dispensed for the honour of the governor's character, and the advantage which will redound to the community from the salutary influence of example. As God is the governor of the world, it is not sufficient that he is just, unless he also appear to be just. The retribution which takes place after death is unknown. We see men of different characters die; but we cannot trace the flight of their souls into the invisible world, nor hear the sentence pronounced from the tribunal before which they appear; and our conjectures upon the subject may often be very far from the truth. Hence a general judgment, at which all the descendants of Adam will be present, seems necessary to the display of the justice of God, to such a manifestation of it as will vindicate his government from all the charges which impiety has brought against it, satisfy all doubts, and leave a conviction in the minds of all intelligent creatures, that he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. It is expedient that at the winding up of the scheme, all its parts should be seen to be worthy of Him by whom it was arranged and conducted. In this way, those who have witnessed, with many disquieting thoughts, the irregularity and disorder in the present system, will have ocular evidence that there never was the slightest deviation from the principles of equity, and that the cause of perplexity, was the delay of their full operation. They will see the good and the bad no longer mingled together, and apparently treated alike, but separated into two classes, the one on the right hand of the Judge, and the other on his left, and distinguished as much at least by their respective sentences, as by the places which they occupy. We perceive, then, the reason that the judgment passed upon each individual at the termination of his life, will be solemnly ratified at the end of the world. There may be another reason for the public exercise of justice in the final allotment of the human race. It may be intended to be a spectacle to the universe; it may be an act of the divine administration, which will extend its influence to all the provinces of his empire. We are sure that angels will witness it; and if there are other orders of rational creatures, it may be a solemn lesson to them, by which they will be confirmed in fidelity to their Creator, and filled with more profound veneration of his infinite excellences.

The time of the general judgment is a secret which God has reserved to himself. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven."\* An opinion seems to have been entertained by some persons in the primitive church, that the awful event was not distant; but only the lying lips of such a man as Gibbon could dare to say "that its near approach had been predicted by the apostles; the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples; and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ himself, were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of man in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished, which had beheld his humble condition upon earth."† The prophecy of our Saviour to which he refers, evidently relates to the destruction of Jerusalem, and is interspersed with several circumstances which clearly prove, that, although the style is bold and highly figurative, it is a local calamity which is announced, a desolation beyond the limits of which it was possible to escape, an event which would be followed by other events in a long succession; in a word, that the prophecy does *not* foretell the end of the world. It is so far

\* Matt. xxiv. 36.

† Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, chap. xv.



from being true that its near approach was predicted by the apostles, that, when the notion began to prevail, they set themselves to oppose it, as we learn from the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, in which Paul beseeches them in the most solemn terms, not to be shaken in mind or troubled, as if the day of Christ were at hand, and proceeds to inform them of other events which would precede it, and consequently proved that it was still remote. It is commonly said that the design of keeping it secret, is to excite us to watch and to be always prepared. This is the improvement which we should make of the fact that there is a future judgment; but it will not seem to an accurate thinker to arise properly from the uncertainty of the time, because amidst our total ignorance of the day and the hour, we are assured, as men in past generations might have been, that it will not take place during our lives. There is a long series of prophecies which will be fulfilled before the coming of Christ, and by the details of which ages will be consumed. This may be a topic of popular declamation, but it will not bear exact inquiry. Some things in Scripture which are understood to favour the idea, relate to the destruction of Jerusalem. It may operate in this way upon the men who shall live after the prophecies are fulfilled, and who, if they rightly discern the signs of the times, may justly conclude that the end of all things is at hand. In our age, the immediate motive to vigilance and activity, is the uncertainty of the time of our death, which will be precisely the same to us in its effects as the second coming of Christ; for after death is the judgment, when the state of every man will be immutably fixed.

As we have no means of ascertaining the time of the general judgment, so it is impossible to say any thing respecting its duration. It is called a day; but the use of this term in the Scriptures is indefinite, and it marks at one time a shorter, and at another a longer period. There is no doubt that the Judge could in a moment separate the righteous from the wicked, and having then passed sentence upon them, send them immediately away to their respective abodes; but we cannot conceive that this summary process would answer the end of the judgment, which we apprehend to be not simply the reward of the good, and the punishment of the bad, but the display of justice in particular cases. If our notion of a detailed procedure is correct, as the design of it will be to convey just ideas of the divine character to the minds of creatures, whose thoughts follow in a train, a natural day seems to us too short for the disclosure of so many secrets, the correction of so many apparent irregularities, the solution of so many perplexities, the determination of so many cases. But we speculate in ignorance, and it is wiser to rest in the general conclusion, that the business will be so conducted, as to produce in every mind a full conviction of the consummate rectitude of the divine government.

“Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”\* This question of the disciples related to our Saviour’s prediction of the destruction of the temple, and his answer must be considered as bearing upon that point. It is a great mistake, therefore, to bring forward the circumstances enumerated by him as signs of his second coming, because they were to precede the fall of Jerusalem; and he expressly told his disciples that the generation then existing should not pass away till all these things were fulfilled. We know of no signs but the fulfilment of prophecy. The Gospel will be preached to all nations; antichrist will fall; the Jews will be converted; the millennium will succeed, or the thousand years of his spiritual reign upon earth; and, it should seem, will be followed by a period of impiety, when the wicked will go up on the breadth of the earth, to compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city.

\* Matt. xxiv. 3.

† Rev. xx. 9.

Then the Judge will appear upon his throne ; but, in the order of events, the intervals are not marked, and the whole is expressed in such figurative and general terms as to convey no definite information respecting the time. Past prophecies have been gradually, and sometimes insensibly fulfilled. We may, therefore, presume that, although those who shall live towards the end of the world, when the predictions are accomplished, may know that the end of all things is approaching, they will be as incapable as we are of calculating the time ; and that, even to them, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, suddenly, and without previous warning.

The place where the judgment will be held is this world ; and as it is said that the saints shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, it should seem that the wicked will be left standing upon the earth. What region of it will be chosen for the last and solemn scene, it would be presumptuous to conjecture. The following passage in Joel has no relation to the subject : “ Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat ; for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.”\* The valley of Jehoshaphat, lying between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, is of small extent ; but the scene of the last judgment will afford ample space for the countless millions who will be assembled upon it to hear their final doom. All nations shall be gathered before the Son of man. The judgment, therefore, presupposes the resurrection, of which, however, I shall not at present speak, as it will occur in another part of this course. The whole order of angles was created at once ; it has received no increase, and sustained no diminution since its commencement. The human race consisted, at first, of a single pair, from whom successive generations are derived, according to the peculiar law of their nature ; and as they were made subject to death in consequence of sin, they have passed along the stage of life, and after a short display, vanished from sight. It is but a small portion of mankind that is alive at any particular period. Multitudes have retired into the land of darkness and oblivion ; multitudes will yet be raised up by the creating power of God, to spend their transient day in the light of the sun, and then descend into the shades of death.

When the Son of man shall be revealed in his glory, he will call upon the earth and the sea to give up their dead, and all who ever breathed the breath of life from Adam to his last son, who, like him, returned to the dust, shall arise, and, together with those who are then alive, shall stand in their lot at the end of their days. The men of the present age will be mingled in the same crowd with the antediluvians, and with those who shall be summoned from their dwellings and their occupations by the voice of the archangel. All ranks and conditions will be confounded. Those whom birth, and office, and wealth, and talents placed at a distance from each other, will stand upon the same level ; the great without their ensigns of dignity, and the poor without their marks of abasement, for then only moral distinctions will be regarded. The oppressor and the oppressed will be there, the one to obtain the redress of his wrongs, and the other to have his violence returned upon his own head. Statesmen, whose avarice or profusion impoverished nations, and whose intrigues involved them in wars ; princes, who imagined that mankind were made for them ; and blood-stained heroes, who acquired an illustrious name by desolating the earth, will stand before the tribunal, amidst the cries and execrations of millions whom they ruined with impunity. Jews and Gentiles, Mahometans and Christians, the learned and the unlearned, the bond and the free, the high and the low, will appear divested of all adventitious circumstances, to render an account to Him who is no respecter of persons, and whose omniscient eye will distinguish each individual in the immense throng as

\* Joel iii. 12.



easily as if he were alone. Not one of the righteous shall be forgotten, and not one of the wicked shall find a hiding-place from the justice of the Judge.

The Judge is Jesus Christ, as we are informed in the passages formerly quoted. As sustaining this character, he is to be considered, not simply as the second Person of the Trinity, to whom, in common with the other persons, the government of the moral and natural world belongs but as mediator. His divinity is presupposed, as we shall afterwards see; but, in the final retribution, he will act as the Father's delegate, and exercise official power. For this statement we have his own authority: "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."\* The communication of power to him is expressly asserted; and the reason assigned, "because he is the Son of man," imports that it is imparted to him in his mediatorial character to reward his humiliation and sufferings, and to qualify him to accomplish all the ends of his office. Hence he will appear not only in his own glory, but in the glory of his Father, bearing this honourable commission which will exalt him so highly in the eyes of angels and men.

There is a manifest congruity in appointing him, who was the Saviour, to be the judge of the human race. It was fit that the promises which he had made, and the threatenings which he had denounced, should be carried into effect by himself; that, from his hand, those who had submitted to his law should receive their reward, and those who had been disobedient their punishment. It was fit that he should bring to a close the dispensation which he had established by his personal interposition, and should fulfil, in his eternal state, the destinies of those for whom its benefits were intended. Besides, as the judgment is appointed for the public manifestation of the righteousness of the divine government, it was necessary that there should be a visible judge, whose proceedings all should witness, and whose voice all should hear. The proper person, therefore, is Jesus Christ, who, having assumed our nature, will appear in it unchanged in essence, although invested with glory suitable to the dignity of his person and the rank which it holds as the head of the creation of God. On Sinai the Israelites beheld the awful tokens of the divine presence; but they only heard the voice of their law-giver. When Jesus Christ comes with clouds, "every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."†

It is a man who will be revealed from heaven as the Judge of men; but that man being also the Son of God, is possessed of all the attributes of divinity. These are necessary to the execution of his office. The decision of so many cases involving innumerable particulars, in themselves intricate and perplexed, and connected with other cases by multiplied aspects and relations, will manifestly require knowledge not inferior to omniscience. Who but God could distinguish every individual in this vast assembly? Who but God could remember, if I may be permitted to use this term, all the incidents of their lives? Who but God could form a just estimate of their actions, by a direct and unerring reference to the circumstances in which they were performed, and the motives from which they proceeded? Who but God could bring to light the secrets of the heart, upon which the sentence will be founded in all cases, but more particularly in those where the external conduct was a superficial show; and where it is only by a disclosure of principles carefully concealed, that the persons will appear to be deserving of their doom? No created mind is capable of comprehending all the details of this multifarious

\* John v. 22, 26, 27.

† Rev. i. 7.

transaction, or of attaining to the prerogative of God, who says, "I search the heart and the reins." Upon the adequate knowledge of the judge will be founded the rectitude of his decisions. He cannot err in judgment; and besides, he is essentially just. As he loves righteousness, loves it as necessarily as he exists, so he is exposed to no influence which might counteract the dictates of equity. He is subject to no partialities; he feels not the disturbing effects of pity or anger; he proceeds calmly, but steadily, to his purpose; and every sentence which he pronounces, rests upon the immutable basis of law. Among the multitude of the condemned, however severe may be their punishment, and however impatiently they may bear it, there will not be one who will dare to accuse his judge of injustice. In the mind of every man a consciousness of guilt will be deeply fixed; he will be compelled to blame himself alone, and to justify the sentence which has rendered him for ever miserable. The power of Jesus Christ is infinite, as well as his knowledge and his justice. The works which will signalize the great day, are operations of omnipotence. Omnipotence only could raise the dead from their graves, bring all nations to the tribunal, however reluctant to obey the summons, cast the ungodly into the flames of hell, and open the gates of heaven, to give admission to the righteous. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."\*

Several circumstances are mentioned in Scripture, which will attend the coming of our Saviour to judgment. "Behold he cometh with clouds."† There seems to be no reason why these words should not be literally understood, as the coming is not figurative, and the manifestation of Christ will be made to the bodily eyes. When God descended to publish the law to the Israelites, there was a thick cloud upon the mountain, from which issued peals of thunder and flashes of lightning. It may be the design of the apostle to signify, that something similar will take place on the day of the Lord. He will be surrounded with clouds, in form and magnitude, and dazzling splendour, corresponding to the grandeur of the occasion, and the majesty of the person who will come on them as his magnificent chariot. Among these clouds his throne will be erected. It is called in Scripture, a great white throne; and, as there will be a real representation to the senses, this may be understood to signify the appearance of a seat, on which he will sit, as human judges do, when causes are tried before them. He will be elevated above the assembly, and all eyes will be raised to him, in solemn expectation of his final award.

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God."‡ Three sounds are distinctly mentioned, but I do not pretend to know what they are. There is probably an allusion to an important circumstance in the awful appearance of God upon Sinai: "On the third day, in the morning, there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud." "And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice;"§ that is, Moses said, as we are informed by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "I exceedingly fear and quake."|| Those will be terrible sounds, which will shake the hearts of the guilty with fear, and be a solemn prelude to that more terrible voice, which will consign them to everlasting woe. I may remark in

\* 2 Thess. i. 7—9.

§ Exod. xix. 16, 19.

† Rev. i. 7.

‡ Heb. xii. 21.

¶ 1 Thess. iv. 16.



passing, that the opinion of those who affirm, that there is no such creature as an archangel, and that under this title, our Lord himself is described, is refuted by this passage, in which the Lord is plainly distinguished from the archangel; the most blundering writer meaning to say that, in the descent of Christ, his own voice will be heard, would not have changed the designation from Lord to archangel, and thus have led his readers to think of two persons, instead of one. It is certain that the judge will be attended by the heavenly host. He will come with his holy angels, perhaps in a visible form, who will not only increase the pomp and splendour of his appearance, and be spectators of a scene so interesting to the whole intelligent creation, but will have high and honourable offices to perform, both to the righteous and the wicked. "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." These are the tares growing in the field of the world; but the wheat shall be also gathered into the barn by the same ministry, and "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father."\*

The saints being caught up into the clouds, by the ministry of the angels, to meet the Lord in the air, and the wicked being left upon the earth, the judgment will proceed. Into the details we cannot enter, because our information is very general, and some things are expressed in figurative language. It is evidently the design of the following passage to teach us, that an exact inquiry will be made, and the judgment will be conducted with a strict regard to justice. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were open: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."†. No person can suppose that books will be literally used on this occasion. The books, therefore, seem to signify the different laws under which men have been placed, and by which justice requires that they should be tried: and the correctness of this idea may be inferred from the statement, that they will be "judged out of the books, according to their works" importing that there will be a comparison of their actions with a standard, and that the sentence will be founded upon the result.

First, Those who were not favoured with divine revelation, will be judged by the law of nature, or the law originally given to man as the rule of his conduct. Some portion of this law has been preserved among the Gentiles, partly by reason and partly by tradition; and although the traces of it are in some instances obliterated, and in others obscured, yet so much remains as to render them accountable beings, and to be the foundation of a judicial trial. Men have not lost all sense of justice, of truth, of humanity, of the duties arising from the various relations which they bear to one another. The Apostle Paul refers to their knowledge of morality, in these words: "When the Gentiles which have not the law," that is, the law in writing as the Jews had, "do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."‡ How far their ignorance will exempt them from responsibility, is a question of some difficulty, which is rashly decided when ignorance is pronounced to be a complete excuse. If the ancient Gentiles become so vain in their imaginations as to worship the creature instead of the Creator, and so blind in moral distinctions as to account gross sensuality no crime, and to practise unnatural lusts without a blush, does it follow that their idolatry and abandoned profligacy were not sins? To this

\* Matt. xiii. 41, 43.

† Rev. xx. 12.

‡ Rom. ii. 14, 15.

conclusion the plea set up by some men in behalf of ignorance would lead us, but it receives no countenance from Scripture, which speaks of the conduct of those Gentiles in the strongest terms of reprobation. Ignorance may procure an alleviation of punishment, but unless absolutely invincible will not entitle any man to exemption from it. I have no doubt, however, that if we should fix the standard for the Gentiles by what they actually knew, not one of them would escape condemnation; not even their most celebrated teachers of morality, who were accused in their own time of indulging the vices against which they loudly declaimed. "As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law."\*

Secondly, The Jews will be judged by the law of Moses and the prophets, which placed them in much more favourable circumstances than the Gentiles, for the knowledge of their duty; and vain will be their boast of the law, if they are at last found to be transgressors. "As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law."† They are the servants who knew their master's will; and if they neglected to do it, they "shall be beaten with many stripes."

Thirdly, Christians in general will be judged by the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and will be subjected to a heavier doom than either Heathens or Jews, in consequence of their superior privileges. The ignorance of individuals will not excuse them, because they might have known their duty in all its details; and equally unavailing will be the usual pleas of the infirmity of human nature, and the strength of temptation. In revelation there is every enforcement of duty which is fitted to operate upon the reason and conscience of intelligent beings; and the means are provided by which the guilty may obtain the favour of God, and the weak may be enabled to perform acceptable service. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."‡

Lastly, The saints will be judged out of the book of life, which some understand to be the decree of God appointing them to salvation; but it seems rather to be the gospel, or the law of faith, which says, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."§ On comparing their exercise and conduct with this law, it will be found that they are believers, and consequently that they have a claim to the glorious recompense promised to faith. Their title will be made manifest by their works, for according to their works all the dead will be judged. They will be produced as evidences of the genuineness of their faith; and it is on this ground that our Lord represents himself as saying to them, "I was hungry, and ye gave me meat." "I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink." I shall afterwards have an opportunity to consider more fully the judgment as it respects the righteous, and shall therefore pass over at present some important particulars.

The declaration of the Judge concerning those on his right hand that they are righteous, and concerning those on his left hand that they are wicked, will be sufficient to convince all in the immense assembly, that the sentence pronounced upon each individual is just. There will be no need of witnesses as in human courts, because the Judge is omniscient and unerring in his decisions. There will be a testimony to their rectitude, as it respects himself, in the bosom of every man. All his past actions will be recalled, and with all their circumstances will pass before his mind in rapid succession; his conscience will then be faithful, and it will re-echo the voice of the Judge, and draw from every tongue an acknowledgment that he is "a God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed."

\* Rom. ii. 12.

† Ib.

‡ John iii. 19.

§ Mark xvi. 16.



When the investigation is finished, and every man is prepared to hear his doom, the Judge will say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And to those on his left, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."\* The execution of these sentences will take place in an inverse order, if we are to understand the following words, as stating the succession of events: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."† The wicked will be driven from the place of judgment, by the power of the Judge and the ministry of angels; while the saints will witness this awful display of justice and wrath, and then, in the train of the Redeemer, enter into the mansions of glory. As I shall have another opportunity to direct your attention to the state of the righteous in the world to come, I shall reserve till then the remarks which may be made upon this interesting subject.

The punishment of the wicked will consist, in the first place, in being driven from the presence of Christ, which will be a far heavier doom than to be excluded for ever from the light of the sun. It is to be deprived of happiness and of hope. Whatever connexion may have subsisted between him and them in this world, where many of them were members of his church, he will hold no more intercourse with them: "I know you not, ye workers of iniquity." It is represented, in the second place, as punishment by fire; but it is doubtful whether this ought to be literally understood. It is certain that another description of their doom admits of a figurative explanation,—when it is said that their worm shall never die; and as the worm and the fire are coupled together, the same mode of interpretation may be applied to both. The design probably is, by this terrible image, to give us an idea of the excruciating nature of the sufferings which they will endure in body and soul. It is a punishment in which they will be associated with the devil and his angels. The place was prepared for those apostate spirits, and will be the common receptacle of them and of wicked men, who joined the standard of revolt which they raised against the government of God. Throughout the whole extent of his mighty empire, purity and bliss will prevail, except one dark and remote region, the prison of the universe, the accursed spot to which rebels and outcasts are exiled. In a word, it will be everlasting punishment. By some, its eternity is denied; and their hypothesis is maintained by a train of reasoning founded on ignorance and presumption, and by violent perversion of Scripture. To every man who reads his Bible with attention and submission of mind, their arguing proves nothing but the earnestness of their wishes to obscure the evidence of truth. They would have it that future punishment is temporary, and therefore it must be so. The same word is used by our Lord to express the duration of the life of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked; and if the one is eternal, so must be the other.

Time having run its course, eternity will commence. The earth, on which men were appointed to act the preparatory part, will pass away, or be changed, for the precise import of the passages which relate to this subject is doubtful. This chosen theatre of the moral administration of God towards the human race, seems to be no longer wanted, when all his designs are accomplished. The event is announced in terms suitable to its grandeur, which awaken in the mind an indistinct but awful idea of a tremendous display of almighty power. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up."‡ The impression which the breaking up of the present system should

\* Matt. xxv. 34, 41.

† Ib. 46.

‡ 2 Pet. iii. 10.

make upon us, is at the same time pointed out, and a prospect is opened to us of a new order of things, of a regenerated system, of an earth which will never be polluted by sin, and of heavens whose brightness no clouds will obscure, and whose serenity no storms will disturb. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."\*

"The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day."† I have said nothing respecting them, because the Scripture has furnished us with no details. They will then be deprived of their present liberty, and shut up for ever in Tartarus. Their punishment will be augmented, and the end of the world is the time of torment, to which they now look forward with dread. "Art thou come to torment us before the time?"‡

## LECTURE LXIV.

### THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

The Kingdom conferred on the Mediator—Distinguished from Christ's natural Kingdom—In what Nature he administers its Affairs—Its Universality—View of it in Reference to the Church—Inquiry into the Duration of the mediatorial Kingdom and Office.

HAVING seen that our Lord, after his resurrection, ascended to heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God, let us inquire into the nature of the kingdom which was conferred upon him. Before he left the world, he said to his disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."§ David thus addressed him, by the spirit of prophecy, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."|| His kingdom is expressly mentioned in this passage; and it is described by the usual ensigns of royalty—a throne, on which the Monarch sits, and a sceptre, which he holds in his hand as an emblem of authority. The design of the sacred writer in using these figures—for in the present case the words cannot be literally understood—is to lead our thoughts to the thing signified by them, the Sovereign dominion of Christ.

It is his mediatorial kingdom of which I am at present speaking, or the kingdom which belongs to him, considered not simply as the Son of God, but as mediator. Upon due attention to the words already quoted, and others of a similar import, it appears to be a kingdom given to him, a kingdom to which he was anointed, a kingdom held by gift and delegation from God his God, or the Father, who engaged in the eternal covenant to reward his obedience with the empire of the Universe. As the Son of God, he does not reign by gift or delegation, but by original right; for, being the Creator of all things, he is by necessary consequence their Governor, possessing absolute authority over his

\* 2 Pet. iii. 11—13.

† Jude 6.

‡ Matt. viii. 29.

§ Matt. xxviii. 1.

|| Ps. xlv. 6, 7.



own works, a power to continue, to change, to annihilate them according to his pleasure, and for the manifestation of his glory. Creatures are essentially dependent upon him who made them, for the act of creation gave them being, but did not render them self-existent; and this truth will be evident whether we consider them as inanimate, or as endowed with life and activity. As matter is known from experience to be inert, incapable of changing its state, the movements and arrangements which we observe in the material system, must be attributed to an external cause, namely, the power of its Author. Living beings, and particularly men, who are possessed of understanding and will, often act capriciously and perversely, so that no steady plan could be pursued, no design worthy of his Maker could be accomplished, if he did not constantly interpose to restrain them within certain bounds, and to overrule their actions to an end very different from that which they contemplate. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."\* "He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of it he restraineth."† Such is the natural government of the Son of God over the works of his hands, visible and invisible, on earth and in heaven.

His mediatorial kingdom is not different in respect, if I may speak so, of its territory and its subjects. When we say that he received a kingdom from the Father, we do not compare him to an earthly monarch, who, reigning over one country by original right, acquires dominion over another by inheritance or by conquest. A new kingdom in this sense was impossible; for where should it have been found, since already every region of space acknowledged his sway? In order to prevent confusion of ideas, and to avoid perplexing ourselves with the inquiry, how Jesus Christ could receive a kingdom, if he was from the beginning Lord of all, we have only to consider his mediatorial kingdom as being his original kingdom, invested with a new form, wearing a new aspect, administered for a new end. The proper view of the subject is this: that our Saviour being, as—mediator, the servant of the Father, was authorised by him to conduct, in subservience to the design of his office, the affairs of the universe, which had always been under his direction. Strictly, his investiture with a kingdom was his investiture with a right to exert the power which he had always possessed, for a specific purpose, namely, the salvation of the church; and it may be imperfectly illustrated by supposing a son, who was conjoined with his father in the kingdom, to begin by his consent a new system of administration, with a view to the good of his subjects. In this case his power would not be augmented, but it would be exerted in a different series of operations. In consequence of his advancement to this kingdom, the mediator makes all things directly or indirectly, by a more remote or a nearer influence, work together for the establishment, the trial, the purification, the increase, the final triumph and perfection of that select society, which he redeemed with his blood, and which is placed under his immediate care. He is "head over all things to the church which is his body."‡ Hence we perceive that they err, who confine his mediatorial kingdom to the church, not considering that, while it is the chief object of his attention, the whole system of things is so managed as to be subservient to its interests; in the same way as, by the constitution of nature, the earth, with its mountains and valleys, its springs and rivers, and various productions, was designed to minister to man. "All things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.\*

In consequence of this constitution, the course of events is changed, not sensibly, but in respect of the influence which they exert, and the point in

\* Dan. iv. 35. † Ps. lxxvi. 10. ‡ Eph. i. 22, 23. § 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

which they will terminate. While the providence of our exalted Redeemer extends its vigilance and care to every being and every occurrence, there is one design which is contemplated and pursued amidst the ever-varying scenes of the world. There is a plan within a plan; and that which is least considered, and by many is entirely overlooked, is first in his intention, and will be most glorious in its completion. When this plan is finished, the complicated machinery by which it was carried on will be demolished; the succession of generations will stop; the frame of society will be dissolved; and the heavens and the earth which now are, will be annihilated or changed. Jesus Christ reigns as the King of his church; and that he may afford all the protection and advantage to his people which they need and expect, he is also King of the world. Empires rise and fall, individuals are born and die, the Gospel visits one country and retires from another, under his superintendence and agency. Angels descend from their bright abodes to minister to the heirs of salvation, and grace falls gently like the dew upon the souls of his people, to prepare them for a more perfect state. As a King, he distributes royal gifts: "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."\* To his kingdom, as it respects the church, your attention will be afterwards more particularly directed.

The mediatorial kingdom is administered by our incarnate Redeemer. This is a view of the subject, which demands particular attention. The kingdom is administered by Jesus Christ, considered not simply as a divine person, but as a divine person united to human nature, which shares in the dignity and glory of his state of exaltation. Human nature was the organ by which he manifested his love to our race. Having assumed it, he humbled himself, endured the contradiction of sinners and the evils of life, and submitted to the ignominious death of the cross. May we not conceive that our nature is the organ, by which he manifests the glory which the Father has conferred upon him, as the reward of his voluntary and meritorious sufferings? Let me not be understood to insinuate, that it is now endowed with divine perfections. I know that, as it is a created nature, its powers must always be comparatively limited, although enlarged beyond calculation, so as to leave the loftiest angel at an inconceivable distance. It is in human nature that he is contemplated and acknowledged by angels and men in heaven, as the Lord of all worlds. In the symbolical descriptions of his exaltation, he appears as "a lamb that had been slain," that is, in his assumed nature, which alone was capable of suffering and dying, and is hailed by the voices of ten thousand times ten thousand around the throne, and by a chorus of praise from every part of the creation. According to the Psalmist, it is man whom God "has crowned with glory and honour:" it is man whom he has "set over the works of his hands;" it is under the feet of man that he has put the "fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas."† From the commentary of an apostle, we learn, that these things are spoken of our Saviour.‡ It is by man that the last and solemn act of the divine government will be performed, when the millions of mankind shall be assembled before the tribunal, and judged according to their works. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."§

\* Acts ii. 33.

† Ps. viii. 4.

‡ Heb. ii. 6.

§ John v. 26—29.



Revelation unfolds to our wondering eyes, a view of the state of the universe altogether new. The conclusion to which reason conducts us, is, that He who created all things, upholds them by his power, and guides them by his wisdom. This conclusion is not contradicted, but rather is confirmed by the Scriptures, which throw new light upon this as well as other truths which were formerly known, and extricate it from the obscurity and perplexity in which it was involved by the speculations of science falsely so called. We still say that men and angels, beings visible and invisible, animate and inanimate, are sustained by the almighty arm which gave them existence, and are subject to its controul. But instructed in the personal distinctions of the godhead, which unaided reason could not have discovered, we learn that the administration of universal nature is the peculiar province of Him, who, on the ground of a mysterious relation, is called the Son; and that he exercises this high office in human nature, which, by an act equally mysterious, he has made his own. To this wonderful fact we reverently give our assent; but perhaps it is not so often, and so distinctly present to our minds as it ought to be, when its importance is considered; and we are apt to forget, when we are surveying the diversified scenes of creation, that every movement is effected by him who died upon the cross, as a sacrifice for our sins. What an interesting thought, that heaven and earth are obedient to the voice of one who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and who retains amidst his glory the feelings of a friend and brother! What honour has God conferred upon our nature, by setting it far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, both in this world and that which is to come. It was this instance of the divine goodness, which excited the admiration and gratitude of the holy Psalmist, when, contemplating the heavens, he burst out into this devout exclamation, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of man that thou visitest him?"\* This is the true system of the universe, full of consolation and hope to believers, although philosophers may be ignorant of it, or may treat it with scorn. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."†

I have already said, that the mediatorial kingdom of Christ is a gift of the Father, and properly ought to be considered as the recompense of his humiliation and sufferings. This connexion is stated in the following passage, which at the same time gives a sublime view of the exalted state of our Redeemer, and shows the unlimited extent of his dominions. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."‡ It appears from this and other passages, that nothing is exempt from his authority. He gives law to matter, and to the irrational tribes; he commands the armies of heaven; he claims the inhabitants of the earth as his subjects; he rules over the spirits of darkness; he is the Lord of the dead and of the living. But it is not necessary to our present purpose to take a minute survey of his mediatorial kingdom in all its extent. Let us view it in relation to the church, which

\* Ps. viii. 4.

† Ps. xcvi. 1, 2.

‡ Phil. ii. 5—11.

is the peculiar object of his care, and for the sake of which all power in heaven and on earth was given to him. The proper object of his mediatorial kingdom is the church, although it embraces many other things; the world engages his attention no farther than it is subservient to the present good and final salvation of the church: "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."\*

I remark, in the first place, That, having ascended to heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, he founded the church by the ministry of his apostles. During his personal ministry, he announced that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The disciples, imbued with Jewish prejudices, asked, after his resurrection, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"† dreaming of a temporal monarchy. It commenced on the day of Pentecost, when he poured out the Holy Ghost upon his disciples, to qualify them for the work of preaching the gospel, and erecting the church. Peter, referring to what they had witnessed, called upon the Jews to consider it as a proof of the great authority with which our Redeemer was invested: "He being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."‡ Having vanquished on the cross the god of this world, he proceeded to rescue from his power unhappy men whom he had long held in bondage, and to make them the subjects of his own kingdom. The difficulties with which the enterprise of the apostles was attended, were many and formidable; sufficient, it might have been thought, to render their endeavours abortive. There never was an undertaking, the failure of which might have been more confidently predicted. Were twelve fishermen to convert the world to a religion repugnant to their former notions, and habits, and tastes, and to unite the most hostile sects in one society of love? What folly in uneducated men to make an attempt which would have been too arduous for the learned and the eloquent! Yet they did succeed; and Christianity obtained such an interest in the minds and affections of thousands, as paved the way for its subsequent diffusion over a considerable part of the earth. Jews and Gentiles were brought together in holy fellowship; and a community of faith, and worship, and interest, was established among men of different countries and languages. The design of employing instruments so inadequate, in respect of natural talents and accomplishments, was to illustrate the power of Jesus Christ, and to show that he is the author of the second as well as of the first creation. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."§ The first act of royal authority which he performed after ascending his throne, was to establish his kingdom upon earth; and the means corresponded to its nature. It is a spiritual kingdom; and was not erected by force of arms, but by the persuasive influence of the truth, and the invisible operations of grace. "He shall come down as rain on the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth."|| The kingdom of heaven came not with observation, with noise and external pomp; but its progress was silent and gradual, and was illustrated by the apt similitude of seed cast into the ground, which springs and grows up, a man knows not how. On the day of Pentecost, a train of events commenced, which will ultimately realize the vision and the prophecy. A stone, cut out without hands, brake in pieces the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw; and it became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This is the interpretation:—"In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed:

\* Ps. ii. 6.    † Acts i. 6.    ‡ Ib. ii. 33—36.    § Ps. cx. 2.    || Ib. lxxii. 6



and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”\*

In the second place, He prescribed the form and order of his church, enacting laws and ordinances to be observed in it, and claiming absolute authority over the souls and consciences of the members. Before he ascended to heaven—for even then he possessed regal power, although he had not been formally invested with it—he appointed baptism and the sacred supper, and commanded the Gospel to be preached; and afterwards he enabled the apostles, by the spirit of wisdom, to arrange all the parts of the system. The church is a voluntary society in this sense, that no person is compelled by force to enter into it, and he only is a genuine member who has joined it from conviction and choice; but there is this important difference between it and other voluntary societies, that the members have no right to settle the terms of their union, but must implicitly submit to its original constitution. Strictly human legislation has no place here; the proper province of the rulers is to execute the laws already made by the sovereign; their decrees possess only subordinate authority, and are not binding, except as they are declarative of his will. “One is our Master, even Christ.” “He is thy Lord, and worship thou him.”† The duty of the church is to submit to his authority; and it is not performed unless his word be received as the only rule of faith and practice, and every thing which is done in religion be exactly conformable to his commands. In the world, his law may be disregarded and violated; but it should be held sacred in the church, which is his kingdom. In the exercise of his authority, he abrogated the law of Moses, which had been binding for fifteen hundred years, and was fondly supposed by the Jews to be of perpetual obligation. He published a new and spiritual law, which will continue in force till the end of time; he removed the priests and Levites from the altar, and established in their room apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers; he changed the nature of the society, by associating the Gentiles with the Jews; he made all places sacred as well as Jerusalem, and ordained that, from the rising to the setting of the sun, incense should be offered to his name, and a pure offering. As soon as he had announced to his disciples that all power was given to him in heaven and in earth, he said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”‡

The authority of Jesus Christ over the church, is exclusive of the authority of man. Councils may be assembled to declare the truth, and condemn heresies, but they can make no new article of faith; they may regulate subordinate matters, the determination of which lies within the sphere of experience and prudence; but they can neither increase nor diminish the sum of our moral obligations. The supremacy claimed by the Pope, is an invasion of the royal prerogative of Christ, although he calls himself his vicar or substitute. He has intruded into this office, and assumes a paramount power; pretending to forgive sins, changing the ordinances, and repealing the laws of heaven, and extending his jurisdiction over the visible and the invisible world. “He exalts himself above all that is called God, and is worshipped; and, as God, he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” Hence, instead of being the vicar of Christ, he is justly called Antichrist, his rival and antagonist, who has usurped dominion over the church, and supplanted the authority of its only lawful head by his own. The connexion between church and state has been generally, and, as some think, uniformly productive

\* Dan. ii. 44.

† Matt. xxiii. 8. Ps. xlv. 11.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

of the same evil, in a greater or a less degree. The alliance is formed on this principle, that the church shall yield something in return for the favour and protection of the state. Without entering upon the question respecting the lawfulness of civil establishments, I content myself with remarking, that, if an earthly sovereign is constituted head of the church, and its affairs are conducted according to acts of parliament, a foreign power is admitted, which, to a certain extent, secularizes his kingdom, and intrenches upon his paramount authority.

The form of the church, under the present dispensation, is not delineated with the same minuteness which we observe in the law of Moses. There every thing is prescribed, the place, and the times, and the ministers of worship, the oblations to be presented, and the rites to be performed in public and in private; nothing is left to human discretion. The New Testament furnishes only an outline, or general principles deduced from occasional hints, and the example of the primitive times. We are fully satisfied with the constitution of our own church, as agreeable to the Scriptural model; but, finding that wise and good men adopt different views, and are equally confident that they are conformable to the apostolical standard, we should beware of contending about the subject with the vehemence and bitterness of zeal, which it has too often elicited; and should cultivate charitable sentiments towards those who hold the same faith, although they do not, in all things, walk according to the same rule. Above all, let us guard against the narrow, unchristian idea, that we alone are the true church, and consequently, that the kingdom of Christ is confined to our little society. All belong to it, who sincerely acknowledge him as their Lord, and are willing to be guided by his word; mistakes about inferior points, and occasional deviations, through ignorance, from the rule which he has prescribed, will not hinder them from being owned as faithful subjects. The kingdom of Christ is catholic. As it is universal by right, so it comprehends within its boundaries all who believe and obey the truth, however diversified by external profession. Some of them may be found even in that pretended church, which is in reality a synagogue of Satan, although it is not easy to conceive how they can retain their allegiance to Christ within the dominions of his adversary; but it is supposed that a remnant will be left there to the last; for immediately before the fall of the mystical Babylon, this warning is given: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."\*

In the third place, He upholds the church throughout all generations, by a constant succession of members. The great promise of eternal life, which he has made to his followers, will be performed in another world; their interest in his salvation secures them against the sting of death, but not against death itself; each in his order, when he has completed his term of obedience and trial, lies down in the grave. When we observe the havock which is daily made among the ranks of his disciples, and see those, who professed the truth, and evinced their sincerity by the stedfastness of their faith and the devoted zeal with which they served him, removed, one after another, into the house of silence, where there is no work, or wisdom, or device, we might be tempted to prognosticate the most gloomy result; and we naturally exclaim, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." But, while the individuals perish, the race remains: *genus immortale manet*. "Instead of the fathers, he takes the children;" the places of those who have fallen, are supplied by their own families, and more frequently by strangers; and thus his promise is fulfilled, that the gates of hell, of *adversaries*,

\* Rev. xviii. 4, 5.



the invisible world, into which the souls of the departed enter, and the grave, which may be considered as its portal, shall not prevail against the church. In fulfilling this promise, several acts of his royal authority and power are exerted. Having received from his Father, after his ascension, the gifts of the Spirit, he bestows them upon those persons whom he is pleased to employ, to qualify them for preaching the Gospel, which is the grand means of gathering subjects into his kingdom of grace; or, in the words of an apostle, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."\* Papists, and some Protestants, boast of the regular succession of their clergy from the apostles; but the latter must acknowledge that, as the Church of Rome was the medium of communication, it is a very corrupt channel in which power has been conveyed to them. This we know, that, in every age, men have been found, who willingly consecrated themselves to his service, and their labours have been crowned with a blessing. Notwithstanding the opposition which it may encounter, he preserves the Gospel in a particular place, till all the elect there are converted; and he sends it into any country, where he has designs of mercy to accomplish, in spite of the efforts of men and devils to exclude it. The power of Rome, which had conquered the world, could not hinder the propagation and triumph of the truth; and the obstacles to its entrance, or its progress, in India, in China, in Turkey, will give way when the time to favour those regions is come. The words of God respecting the temple, are equally applicable to the opposition with which the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah has to contend: "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."† He exerts a secret power upon the heart, which the strongest prejudices and the most inveterate habits of sin are not able to resist. As the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, his servants do not fight for him; and it is only in a figure that the church is represented as "terrible, like an army with banners." Our religion forbids the employment of external force in its propagation and defence, and leaves it to Antichrist, who, in the want of arguments, has recourse to the sword, and terrifies into compliance those whom he has failed to persuade. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are not therefore ineffectual. They are mighty, through God, to pull down the strongholds of sin, to cast down lofty imaginations, and to bring every thought into captivity to Christ. There is no man who may not become a subject of this kingdom. However remote he may now be from this character, however hostile may be his sentiments and feelings, he may undergo a change as sudden and wonderful as that of Paul, who, from being a persecutor, became an apostle, and a preacher of the faith which once he destroyed. The grace of our exalted Redeemer operates silently, but surely; it always gains its end; and there are daily added to the church such as shall be saved. "All they that be fat upon earth, shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him; and none can keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this."‡

In the fourth place, He defends the church against her enemies. These may be considered as invisible and visible. By the former, we mean the spirits of darkness, who have a kingdom of their own to maintain, the overthrow of which will be the sure consequence of the establishment of the king-

\* Eph. iv. 12, 13.

† Zech. iv. 7.

‡ Ps. xxii. 29—31.

dom of Christ. Besides the efforts which they make, by the instrumentality of men who too readily concur with them, they labour immediately to accomplish their designs, by temptations so contrived as to disquiet the faith of Christians, and allure them into the paths of sin. How they are fitted for the conflict, and by what means, although the struggle be severe and injuries be sometimes sustained, they prove ultimately victorious, we learn from the following exhortation; "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."\* The truth, couched under this figurative language, is, that grace is communicated to believers, by which, if skilfully and actively employed, they shall render abortive the attempts of their spiritual adversaries. The power by which they conquer, is not their own, but the power of Jesus Christ, and to him the glory of the victory is due. The visible enemies of the Church are ungodly men, and especially such of them as are possessed of secular authority, or can boast of talents and learning, who, in many instances, have united to arrest the progress of the truth by the terrors of the sword, and to bring it into discredit by argument, misrepresentation, and ridicule. Hitherto they have not prevailed; and experience shows us, as well as the word of God, that we have nothing to fear from the greatest efforts which they may yet make. The repeated persecutions to which the Church was subjected in the first three centuries, are recorded in history. Every thing was done by the combined wisdom and power of the Roman empire, to crush the rising religion; and hopes were entertained and expressed, that the Christian superstition, so it was called, would be extirpated from the earth. But it emerged from the scene of suffering and blood, with increased stature and renovated strength, still contending with paganism for the victory; and the struggle was closed by the conversion of Constantine, who planted the cross upon the capitol of Rome. We have heard of the dreadful conflict which the church had to sustain with the anti-christian power, of the cruelties which were inflicted upon the friends of truth, and the torrents of blood which were shed; and how the faithful were driven into obscure retreats, and compelled for a long season to "prophesy in sackcloth." But at the Reformation, the church rose from her ashes more glorious than ever. Now, what has protected the feeble? what has given power to the faint? what has enabled the minority to maintain a contest so alarming to flesh and blood, and in which no human glory would be gained? It was the grace of Jesus Christ which supported the faith and patience of his followers; it was his Providence which counteracted the designs of their enemies, and marked the boundary beyond which their violence should not pass. "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."† This is the declaration of him who sits at the right hand of the Father: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn."‡ The adversaries of Zion have successively fallen, and, if their memorial has not perished from the earth, their names are branded with infamy; but the church has survived the revolutions of empire, and will continue a monument of the power and love of her exalted Head, till he shall appear in the clouds of heaven, to terminate the warfare, and to receive his

\* Eph. vi. 13—16.

† John iv. 4.

‡ Isa. liv. 17.



people into his eternal kingdom. "He must reign, till all his enemies be put under his feet."\*

Having taken a view of the Mediatorial kingdom of Christ upon earth, chiefly in its relation to the church, I observe, in the last place, that he reigns in the kingdom of glory. He is the Lord of the invisible, as well as of the visible world, and nothing is done in either but according to his will. Heaven was purchased with his blood, and it is fit that to him should be committed the uncontrolled disposal of its glories and joys. He ascended to take possession of it as the reward due to his obedience and death, and to prepare it for his followers. Seated upon the throne, he sways the sceptre of universal dominion, and wears a crown which will never fade away. Upon earth his right to rule is disputed, and his authority is resisted by men of corrupt minds, who do not choose to submit their licentious liberty to the restraints of his law; but, in heaven, every tongue acknowledges him to be Lord, and every heart rejoices to obey him. To him it belongs to admit into the kingdom of glory, or to exclude from it; for he opens, and no man can shut; he shuts, and no man can open. When the saints die, he receives their spirits into the mansions of rest, and assigns his place to each individual; for the rank which they hold, and the degree of felicity which they enjoy, are apportioned by his wisdom and love. Accordingly, they are represented as prostrating themselves, and casting down their crowns, in humble acknowledgment that they hold them as the gifts of his bounty, not as the reward of their personal merit, or of the services which they performed to him upon earth: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power."† The angels join with them in adoration and homage: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."‡ We know little of the invisible state; the revelation is partial, and the notices are obscure; but we are assured that it is under the administration of our Saviour, and that its inhabitants are happy under his care. His glory will not be always concealed. At the destined hour, he will appear in the clouds, and display his power in pronouncing sentence upon the assembled human race; and every knee shall bow before him, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord.

There is a passage which is confessedly obscure, and has exercised the diligence of commentators, upon which, on account of its close connexion with the present subject, it will be proper to bestow some observations: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."§

It is evident that nothing in this passage can be understood to import, that the time will come when the Son, considered as the second Person of the Trinity, shall be reduced to a state of inferiority to the Father. If he is at present equal, the equality will ever continue, because it is not founded on favour or temporary arrangement, but on the possession of the same essence and the same infinite perfections. Between persons to whom the same nature belongs, there may be a distinction of order, but there can be no difference of rank and dignity. In what sense, then, is it said that the Son himself shall be subject to the Father?

In order to obtain some light upon this point, it is necessary to refer to what

\* 1 Cor. xv. 25.

† Rev. iv. 11.

‡ Ib. v. 12.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 24—26, 28.

is said before: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." The words in the one place serve to explain those in the other; for what is first called the delivering up of the kingdom to the Father, is afterwards expressed by the subjection of the Son to him.

The kingdom which he will deliver up to the Father, is not the kingdom pertaining to him as a Divine person having an original and indefeasible right to govern his own works, to reign over his own creation. This dominion is founded in the relation between him and his creatures, and could be conceived to cease only by their ceasing to exist. While they continue to be, he cannot be divested of his authority either by the authority of another, or by his own voluntary act; not by the authority of another, because he has no superior; not by his own act, because he could not renounce the essential prerogative of Godhead.

We have seen that there is another kingdom which he possesses by gift, and which was conferred upon him for a particular purpose, namely, that by his power he might accomplish the design of his death upon the cross, in the conversion and final salvation of his people. He rules, if I may speak so, in the Father's place, and by delegated authority; and this arrangement is founded on their mutual counsels for the redemption of the church. To the eye of faith, guided in its researches into the economy of the universe by the light of revelation, Jesus Christ appears seated upon the throne, and exercising his mighty sway over all its provinces.

From this view of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, it is evident that the purpose for which it was established was temporary. Hence we perceive what may be understood to be the meaning of "delivering up the kingdom to God, even the Father." The kingdom will end when its design is accomplished; he will cease to exercise an authority which has no longer an object. When all the elect are converted by the truth, and being collected into one body, are presented to the Father a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; when idolatry, superstition and heresy are overthrown, and all evil is expelled from the kingdom of God; when the plans and efforts of evil spirits are defeated, and they are shut up in their prison, from which there is no escape; when death has yielded up his spoils, and laid his sceptre at the feet of his conqueror; when the grand assize has been held, his impartial sentence has pronounced the doom of the human race, and their everlasting abodes are allotted to the righteous and the ungodly, nothing will remain to be done by the power with which our Saviour was invested at his ascension; and his work being finished, his commission will expire.

On this subject we cannot speak with certainty, and are in great danger of error, because the event is future, and our information is imperfect. Here analogy fails, and the utmost caution is necessary in borrowing an illustration from human affairs; but, without insinuating that the two cases are exactly similar, may we not say that, as a regent or vicegerent of a king, to whom the royal authority has been intrusted for a time, resigns it at the close, and the sovereign himself resumes the reins of government; so our Redeemer, who now sways the sceptre of the universe, will return his delegated power to him from whom he received it, and a new order of things will commence, under which the dependence of men upon the Godhead will be immediate; and Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one in essence, counsel, and operation, will reign for ever over the inhabitants of heaven. This is the probable meaning of the words, "Then shall the Son himself be subject unto him that put all things under him."

It may be objected, that what has been now said concerning the termination of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, is contrary to those passages of Scripture



which represent it as an everlasting kingdom. But, although the objection is worthy of attention, it is not unanswerable. The terms *everlasting* and *for ever* do not always import absolute eternity, but sometimes signify only a long duration. The ordinances of the ceremonial law are called "statutes for ever," although they have for centuries been abolished, because they were to continue throughout all the generations of Israel. The kingdom of the Messiah is contrasted with the kingdoms of men; and in the book of Daniel, where the epithet everlasting is applied to it, it is opposed to the four great monarchies of ancient times, and notice is given that, while they should disappear in succession, it would survive all civil commotions and political changes, and be commensurate with the world itself. It will not cease till the frame of nature is dissolved, and then it will merge in the eternal kingdom of God. The glory of having once possessed this kingdom, and administered it with wisdom and righteousness, will ever remain to him, and will call forth a tribute of praise from the countless myriads of his subjects.

Perhaps the words of the apostle may be understood to import the termination not only of the mediatorial kingdom, but of the mediatorial office; for he says, that the Son will be subject to the Father, that "God may be all in all;" that a new mode of intercourse with the divine nature may commence, and the communion be immediate and complete.

In the present state, we have not immediate access to the Father; our fellowship is carried on through the mediation of the Son. Even after men have been reconciled to him, the interposition of the third person is necessary, that their friendship may not be broken by their daily transgressions, and that the purity of his nature may be unsullied by his intercourse with the frail and guilty children of the dust. Hence it was necessary, that Jesus Christ should continue a priest after he had died upon the cross, and should enter into heaven with his own blood, to make intercession for us. When the present dispensation has come to an end, this necessity will no longer exist. The design of the mediation of Christ, was to bring men back to God, by sacrifice and intercession. It is accomplished, when pardoned, purified, and translated from earth to heaven, they are so holy that their Maker can look with unqualified approbation upon his own work, and, as in the beginning, pronounce it to be good. May we not, therefore, conceive the mediation to terminate like any other plan, in the execution of which the intention of the contriver has been fulfilled? Why should intercession continue, when there are no sins to be forgiven, and no wants to be supplied, and when the objects of redeeming love are established in a state of perfection beyond the possibility of failure?

It will still be true, that Jesus Christ did once sustain, and gloriously execute, the high office of mediator between God and man. He will still be the object of the love, and gratitude, and praise of the saints. He will still shine as the sun of the celestial world. The millions of the redeemed around the throne will still be the monuments of his triumph. The exercise of his office will cease for the most honourable of all reasons, because its end has been fully gained; but the glory of it will be for ever celebrated in the songs of the blessed: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

What has now been said, is proposed solely as a probable opinion; it would be presumptuous to speak confidently upon a subject so obscure. There are some passages of Scripture which seem to militate against the idea of the termination of the mediatorial office of our Saviour. His continued agency in this character, may be inferred from the declaration, that the Lamb will be the light of the heavenly city.\* But the apparent discrepancy will be removed by conceding, as we most willingly do, that he will retain all the honours due to

\* Rev. xxi. 23.

him as the person who achieved the redemption of the church; and that the great manifestation of the divine glory which will engage the attention of the saints, will be that which is made in him as the incarnate Son and servant of the Father.

Again, it is said, that "the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters;"\* and hence it may be inferred, that he will continue the exercise of his office as the medium through which the happiness of the saints will be communicated. But the words admit of an interpretation in perfect unison with our doctrine; for the felicity of the world to come will be the exclusive effect of his mediation, and it will be owing solely to him, that they who were reconciled to God upon earth, have immediate access to his throne, and know even as they are known.

Once more, it is said of him as mediator, that he ever liveth to make intercession.† But the word *for ever*, as we have already said, does not always denote eternity; for the ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation are called statutes for ever, although they were abolished by the death of Christ. The passage now quoted may therefore be understood to signify nothing more, than that his intercession will last till its designs are accomplished. He ever lives to make intercession, and does not die like the sacrificing and interceding priests of the law; as he reigns for ever, or from age to age, and does not, like earthly princes, descend from the throne and lie down in the grave.

"When this work is finished," says Dr. Owen, "then shall all the mediatory actings of Christ cease for evermore; for God will then have completely finished the whole design of his wisdom and grace in the constitution of his person and offices." He adds, "I would extend this no farther than as to what concerneth the exercise of Christ's mediatory office with respect to the church below, and the enemies of it. But there are some things which belong to the essence of this state which shall continue unto all eternity."‡ I subjoin the words of Dr. Smith: "When all the designs (of the kingdom of Christ) are accomplished, the mediatorial system as to all these (its present) modes of exercise shall cease; Christ will no longer have to act as a redeemer and saviour, the number of his elect will have been accomplished, and his church presented perfect and complete to himself, and to his Divine Father; as a faithful ambassador, whose commission is finished, he will honourably give it back to him who appointed him, and will return to his own personal station, as the Divine and Eternal Son; and then will a new order of the moral universe commence, and the unspeakably vast assemblage of holy creatures, delivered and for ever secured from sin and misery, shall possess the IMMEDIATE fruition of the Father. In his sovereign love the scheme of mediatorial redemption originated, and its blessed completion shall be, in the most sublime and eternally admirable manner, "unto the praise of his glory." God will be all things in all to those happy beings."§

\* Rev. vii. 17.

† Heb. vii. 25.

‡ Owen on the Person of Christ, chap. xix. xx

§ Smith's Scripture Testimony, Book iv. chap. 4.



## LECTURE LXV.

## ON THE APPLICATION OF REDEMPTION.

The Application of Redemption: its Necessity, and what it implies—External Means of it: the Word and Ordinances—Difference between the External and Internal Call of the Gospel—The latter the work of the Holy Spirit—Proof that Conversion is the Effect of Divine Grace.

THE purchase of salvation was made by Jesus Christ in the character of high priest, when he paid the price of his precious blood. But although it was the consequence of this transaction, that the salvation of his people was certain, yet something farther was necessary to make them actual partakers of it. Notwithstanding the propitiatory sacrifice of the cross, they come into the world in a state of guilt and depravity, and often remain in that state for a considerable time. It might seem to us consonant to justice, that the atonement having been made, the benefit of it should be enjoyed by every individual for whom it was offered, as soon as he is in a capable state; or that, in the first moment of his existence, he should be set free from the curse of the law, and regenerated by the Spirit even in the womb of his mother. We find, however, that such is not the case; and in order to account for it, we should reflect, that God is not bound by our notions of fitness and propriety, which are often founded on narrow views; that reasons are manifest to his understanding, which give rise to a procedure different from what we should have expected; that he had an undoubted right, when he purposed the redemption of mankind, to settle according to his own will the season and order of its application; and that the demands of justice will be fully satisfied, if all the elect are delivered from condemnation and misery, whether the event take place at an earlier or a later period. It is enough, that the terms of the covenant which was made with Christ are ultimately fulfilled. The grand stipulation was, that if "he would make his soul an offering for sin," he should "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;"\* and all the circumstances relative to the communication of its benefits, were the subject of subordinate arrangements. The sovereignty of God in the dispensation of grace is displayed, not only in the selection of the persons, to whom it is exercised without any reason on their part, and often with a disregard of the grounds of human preference; but also in calling some of them at the first hour, and others not till the last. With respect to the time, nothing that we know of is necessary, but that they should be called during the course of their life, beyond which the season of mercy does not extend.

The purchase of redemption by Christ in the character of our Priest, secures the salvation of his people. But, as they are by nature children of wrath even as others, they must undergo a change both relative and real; relative in respect of the law, by being acquitted from its charges, and real in respect of their views and dispositions. In the language of Scripture, "their blind eyes must be opened, and they must be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive the remission of their sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith which is in Christ."† Accordingly, the divine procedure towards them is represented in

\* Is. liii. 10, 11.

† Acts xxvi. 18.

the following order: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified;" and these are preliminary steps to their final salvation: for, "whom he justified, them also he glorified."\*

The external means which God employs in the application of redemption, are his ordinances, and particularly his Word, read and heard. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes."† Some, indeed, have supposed, that there is a revelation of grace, (which, however, they acknowledge to be obscure) in the dispensations of providence. They can only mean, that there are such appearances in the course of the moral government of God, as may lead to the conclusion that he is placable, and will pardon sinners who repent. It is enough to say that, with respect to this revelation, the Scriptures are silent, or rather they virtually deny it, while they declare that it is from themselves alone that we derive authentic information of his gracious designs. We see his goodness and patience in providence; but, although thoughtless men may infer, that he is an easy indulgent Being, and such a one as themselves, the indications of nature will not relieve from its fears, a mind conscious of guilt and deeply sensible of demerit. By a person under a conviction of sin, the anxious question will be asked, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the Most High God?"‡ and ignorant of the effectual means of appeasing his wrath, he will be ready to offer his flocks and herds as an atonement, and even his first-born son, as men have sometimes done in the madness of despair. If there is a revelation of grace in the dispensations of providence, the abettors of this opinion may be called upon to produce instances in which it has been effectual to turn sinners to God. Nothing is more vain than speculations concerning what may be; let it be shown that the thing has actually happened. Where shall we find those converts of natural light? Is it among the ancient philosophers who talked of virtue, but did not practise it? Is it among modern heathens, who, amidst the dreadful penances to which some of them submit for the expiation of their sins, discover gross ignorance of the character of God, and of the genuine nature and spirit of religion?

This opinion has been adopted by a late writer in his *New Literal Translation of the Epistles*, with this difference, that he traces the notions entertained by heathens of the placability of the divine nature, to the source of revelation. "The heathens in general," says Dr. Macknight, "believed their deities placable, and, in that persuasion, offered to them propitiatory sacrifices, and expected to be pardoned and blessed by them even in a future state. But these hopes they did not derive from the law or light of nature, but from the promise which God made to the first parents of mankind. For that promise being handed down by tradition to Noah and his sons, they communicated the knowledge thereof, together with the use of sacrifices, to all their descendants. So that the hope of pardon and immortality, which the pious heathen entertained, was the very hope which the gospel hath now clearly brought to light, and was derived from the same source, namely, from divine revelation."§ It seems from this statement, that the heathens have the means of salvation without the written Word. It may be objected that Paul expressly affirms, that men are justified by faith, which implies a revelation of the Saviour, and seems to exclude those who have not been favoured with it; for he tells us that it comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. But, fatal as this objection may be deemed to his hypothesis, this writer removes it with great ease by a definition of faith contrived for the purpose. "Faith does not consist in the belief of particular doctrines, far less in the belief of doctrines which men never had an opportunity of knowing, but in such an earnest desire to

\* Rom. viii. 29, 30.    † Ib. i. 16.    ‡ Mic. vi. 6.    § Com. on Romans, chap. i. View.



know and do the will of God, as leads them conscientiously to use such means as they have for gaining the knowledge of his will, and for doing it when found. And inasmuch as the influences of the Spirit of God are not confined to them who enjoy revelation, but are promised in the gracious covenant made with mankind at the fall to all who are sincere, a heathen by these influences may attain the faith just now described, and thereby may please God. For faith is more a work of the heart than of the understanding. So that, although the persons to whom revelation is denied, may not have the same objects of belief with those who enjoy revelation, they may have the same spirit of faith.”\* Nothing is wanting to this scheme but evidence of its truth, proof that the influences of the Spirit are communicated to heathens, and that faith consists in a sincere desire to know, and a disposition to do, the will of God. Such proof this celebrated theologian has neglected to give. He asserts these things, and then reasons from them, as if they were self-evident, or had been established by a prior demonstration. It is curious to observe, how, having laid down his arbitrary definition of faith, he proceeds with as much confidence as if it were an axiom, to explain by it the Epistle to the Romans, and other passages in the writings of Paul. If you peruse his works with attention, you will find many instances of gratuitous assumption; and indeed there is hardly any author who more freely deals out his *ipse dixit* as argument both in doctrine and in criticism, or who is more remarkable for wresting and misinterpreting the Scriptures. The present hypothesis is a baseless fabric; it is false in all its parts, and is such a barefaced contradiction of the doctrine of the Apostle, as is not surpassed by the most perverse commentary upon his writings.

While I deny, that there is any revelation of grace but in the Scriptures, and any external means of salvation but the word and the ordinances of the Christian religion, I admit, that the dispensations of providence are subservient to God’s merciful designs. They can be considered, however, only as subordinate means, operating in concurrence with the word, and having no efficacy without it. By calamities, and dangers, and the prospect of death, men may be awakened to a concern for their souls; but they will not return to God, and obtain the well-grounded hope of future happiness, till their minds are directed to the Scriptures, in which pardon is promised to believers. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”† “The grace of faith,” says our Confession, “whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the word; by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.”‡

The Word of God consists of two principal parts, the Law and the Gospel, which are both employed in the conversion of sinners. “By the law is the knowledge of sin.”§ When it is applied to the conscience, it shows the sinner his depravity and guilt, makes him sensible of his danger while he is under its curse, and convinces him of his utter inability to relieve himself, because he is incapable of obeying its precepts, and of satisfying for his manifold violations of them. These discoveries create an earnest desire for deliverance from the wretchedness of his natural state, and prepare him to accept it when offered to him; but they are calculated in themselves to drive him to despair, and would have this effect if they were alone. But the Gospel comes with its proclamation of mercy, exhibits the Saviour in his fulness of merit and grace, makes a free offer of his salvation to sinners, and calls upon every man to accept the gift of God with gratitude, and in the exercise of faith. It

\* Com. on Romans, chap. ii. View.

† Rom. x. 17.

‡ Conf. xiv. 1.

§ Rom. iii. 20.

is evident that it is the Gospel which is properly the instrument of conversion, and that the law is only subsidiary, by producing that state of mind in which salvation becomes desirable, and without which it will be regarded with indifference, and the preference given to the transitory interests of the present life. It is by the Gospel that true penitence is awakened, which implies not only the fear of wrath, but the hatred of sin arising from the love of God. The mind is enlightened, the heart is changed, and all those exercises which are called the graces of the Spirit, as faith, and love, and hope, and submission, and a desire for perfection, are excited by its doctrines and promises.

God externally calls men by his word, which is addressed to persons of every nation, of every condition, and of every character. "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men." "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."\* It has been affirmed, indeed, that all men are not the objects of this call, but that it is confined to sensible sinners; by whom are meant persons who have been awakened, and are serious in their desire for salvation. So far, indeed, has this idea been carried, that some have denied that the Gospel should be preached to sinners, as such, in the common acceptance of the word. They will preach it before them, but not to them; that is, they will not offer salvation to them, and invite them to believe. The plainest points of theology have been made the subjects of controversy and misrepresentation. This is one of the refinements of orthodoxy, and has been deduced from high notions respecting the decrees; but it happens to be in direct opposition to many passages of Scripture, and particularly to the commission of Christ to the apostles, which was quoted above. I do not approve of the method of some divines, who have endeavoured to explain away those passages of Scripture in which sensible sinners are supposed to be addressed, and to show that the characters by which they are described are applicable to sinners in general. It is the way of disputants, who are more zealous than wise, to make every thing bend to their favourite opinion. Surely we may grant, that awakened sinners are sometimes the objects of the invitations of Scripture, as it would be surprising indeed if no particular notice were taken of them; and, at the same time, we may believe that the offer of salvation is universal. It was a mixed congregation, or rather a congregation composed entirely of unbelievers, (for they were all Jews and proselytes, who then for the first time heard the Gospel,) whom Paul addressed in the following words:—"Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."† After the cure of the lame man in the temple, Peter did not inquire whether those who crowded around him were the elect, or sensible sinners, but said, without hesitation, to the whole multitude, "Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."‡ To preach the Gospel, is to proclaim pardon through Jesus Christ, to every man who shall believe; and as this is the sense in which it is commonly understood among us, so it will appear, I am persuaded, to every unprejudiced person, to be the Scriptural meaning of it. "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely."§

God calls men externally by his word. But as the word is preached to all men without distinction, it follows, that he calls many to whom he has purposed not to give salvation. A question, therefore, naturally arises, What is the reason of this procedure, and how can it be reconciled with his sincerity? The difficulty is substantially the same in the system of those who admit that God had a certain knowledge of future events, whether they are followers of Calvin or Arminius. For how shall we account for his conduct,

\* Prov. viii. 4. Mark xvi. 15. † Acts xiii. 38. ‡ Ib. iii. 19. § Rev. xxii. 17.



in not only offering salvation to men who he knows will not accept it, but in using the most earnest entreaties, and cogent arguments, to persuade them? I acknowledge that the difficulty, although it presses upon both systems, is greater in that of those who hold the doctrine of absolute and unconditional decrees; because it follows from this doctrine, that God does not intend to bestow salvation on the reprobate; while the others are at liberty to ascribe to him the intention, if they can only reconcile it with the foresight of the event, and explain how, in innumerable cases, it should fail of the effect. Several distinctions have been proposed, in order to throw some light on this dark subject. The external call, it has been said, is extended to the elect and the reprobate in a different manner. It is addressed to the elect primarily and directly, the ministry of the Gospel having been instituted for their sake, to gather them into the church, insomuch that, if none of them remained to be saved, it would cease. It respects the reprobate secondarily and indirectly, because they are mixed with the elect, who are known to God alone, and consequently it could not be addressed to them, without the reprobate being included. This dispensation has been illustrated by rain, which descending upon the earth according to a general law, the final cause of which is the fructification of the soil, falls upon places where it is of no use, as rocks and sandy deserts. Again, it has been said, that the end of the external call may be viewed in a twofold light, as it respects God, and as it respects the call; and these may be distinguished as the end of the worker, and the end of the work. The end of the work, or of the external call, is the salvation of men, because it is the natural tendency of the preaching of the Gospel to lead them to faith and repentance. But this is not the end of the Worker, or God, who does not intend to save all who are called, but those alone to whom he has decreed to give effectual grace. I shall not be surprised to find that these distinctions have not lessened the difficulty in your apprehension. While they promise to give a solution of it, they are neither more nor less than a repetition of it in different words. I shall subjoin only another observation, which has been frequently made, that, although God does not intend to save the reprobate, he is serious in calling them by the Gospel; for he declares to them what would be agreeable to him, namely, that they should repent and believe, and he promises, most sincerely, eternal life to all who shall comply. The call of the Gospel does not show what he has purposed to do, but what he wills men to do. From his promises, his threatenings, and his invitations, it only appears that it would be agreeable to him that men should do their duty, because he necessarily approves of the obedience of his creatures, and that it is his design to save some of them; but the event demonstrates that he had no intention to save them all; and this should not seem strange, as he was under no obligation to do so.

Mr. Burke, in his treatise concerning the sublime and beautiful, has observed, when speaking of the attempt of Sir Isaac Newton to account for gravitation, by the supposition of a subtle elastic ether, that "when we go but one step beyond the immediately sensible qualities of things, we go out of our depth. All we do after, is but a faint struggle, that shows we are in an element which does not belong to us." We may pronounce, I think, these attempts, to reconcile the universal call of the Gospel with the sincerity of God, to be a faint struggle to extricate ourselves from the profundities of theology. They are far indeed from removing the difficulty. We believe, on the authority of Scripture, that God has decreed to give salvation to some, and to withhold it from others. We know, at the same time, that he offers salvation to all in the Gospel; and to suppose that he is not sincere, would be to deny him to be God. It may be right to endeavour to reconcile these things, because knowledge is always desirable, and it is our duty to seek it as far as it can be at-

tained. But if we find that beyond a certain limit we cannot go, let us be content to remain in ignorance. Let us reflect, however, that we are ignorant in the present case only of the connexion between two truths, and not of the truths themselves, for these are clearly stated in the Scriptures. We ought therefore to believe both, although we cannot reconcile them. Perhaps the subject is too high for the human intellect in its present state. It may be, that however correct our notions of the Divine purposes seem, there is some misapprehension which gives rise to the difficulty. In the study of theology, we are admonished at every step to be humble, and feel the necessity of faith, or an implicit dependence upon the testimony of Him who alone perfectly knows himself, and will not deceive us.

When we say that the Word of God is the external instrument of conversion, we must be understood to speak of persons who are capable of knowing and believing it. As infants are not fit subjects of instruction, their regeneration must be effected without means, by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit on their souls. There are adult persons, too, to whom the use of reason has been denied. It would be harsh and unwarrantable to suppose that they are, on this account, excluded from salvation; and to such of them as God has chosen, it may be applied in the same manner as to infants. This is the doctrine of our church: "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth; so also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word."\*

The word of God, which reveals truths so great and interesting, is calculated to illuminate the minds of men, to impress their consciences, and to excite their affections. But often it either entirely fails to produce these effects, or produces them only in such a degree, that no radical and permanent change ensues. We affirm that the Word is the ordinary instrument, but we deny that it is the efficient cause of conversion. We are borne out in this assertion by the express and repeated declarations of Scripture, from which we learn that Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God gives the increase.† Hence we distinguish between the external and the internal call, of which the former extends to all to whom the Gospel is preached, while the latter takes place only in case of the elect. The cause of the difference which we observe in the hearers of the Gospel, of whom some believe, and others reject it, is not free-will, but Divine grace, which works effectually in the former, to will and to do.

This is the doctrine of our church, and, as we shall endeavour to show, is also the doctrine of Scripture. But, as it directly tends to humble the pride of man, to annihilate his pretensions to merit, and to appropriate to God the whole glory of his salvation, it is not palatable to his vitiated taste, and hence it has met with much opposition in ancient and modern times.

Pelagius and his followers maintained that our nature was not corrupted by the fall; that we come into the world in the same state of innocence in which Adam was created; that we have free-will, and are able to do good if we please. According to this system, such a change as we mean by regeneration or conversion is unnecessary. They did, indeed, talk of grace, and Divine assistance in the performance of good works; but these words were used solely in compliment to the phraseology of Scripture, and to impose upon those who might be so simple as to be satisfied with sounds, without inquiring into the sense. When they explained their own meaning, the illusion vanished. "The grace of God, and the assistance which he affords us to preserve us from sinning," says Augustine, "they place either in nature and free-will, or in the law and

\* Conf. chap. x. §. 3.

† 1 Cor. iii. 6.



doctrine; so that when God is said to assist men to shun evil, and to do good, nothing more is meant than that he shows them by revelation what they should do." Thus they admitted only the external call. Men were indebted to God solely for the knowledge communicated by his word, and the exhortations addressed to them in it; the use which was made of these depended entirely on themselves.

In modern times, the doctrine of Pelagius has been adopted by Socinians, and some of the followers of Arminius, who have carried the principles of the sect to the utmost length. With respect to the necessity of Divine grace, and the degree in which it is necessary, there has been a variety of opinions, distinguished by slight shades of difference, which it would be tedious and useless to enumerate. An opinion which has been maintained by many, both Papists and Protestants, is that of sufficient grace, which has been defined to be "grace by which God so calls, excites, and is ready to assist men, in directing, protecting, and co-operating with them, that they are, indeed, able to will, to believe, and be converted, and do good works, although they do not actually will it." It is the same with universal grace, which is so called because it is given to all men. God, who is willing to save all men, has given them sufficient means of faith and repentance; but these means are subject to free-will, which has the power to use this grace or not, to believe or not to believe. Some have gone so far as to maintain, that God was bound by the new covenant to furnish every man with this grace, because otherwise he would have been chargeable with demanding from us what we had not strength to perform.

Similar sentiments are general, and are entertained by many who have not studied the systems in which they are defended, and do not arrange themselves under the standard of Pelagius, or Arminius, or any other heresiarch. They are agreeable to human nature; they seem to arise spontaneously in the mind. It is supposed that we have a power to convert ourselves, not so strong perhaps as it originally was, but still sufficient, especially if we are favoured with proper means and opportunities; that God is ready to assist our sincere endeavours; that, although we must be indebted, in some degree, to his grace, our conversion depends chiefly upon ourselves; and that, if we will only reflect seriously on the subject of religion, and resolve in earnest to forsake our sins, the purposed change will be effected. This doctrine is taught from the press and the pulpit; is received in its most unqualified form, without any doubt of its truth, by the grossly ignorant, who, almost in every place, constitute the majority; and, by some who affect to be more wise, is regarded, when set out in proper phrases, as the pure Gospel of Christ.

In opposition to all the modifications of error upon this subject, we affirm, that conversion is effected by the almighty grace of God; that, although man does not concur in it, he is in the first instance passive, and his concurrence is the consequence of supernatural power communicated to him; and that he does not come to God till he is effectually called by the operations of the Holy Spirit in his soul.

The truth of this doctrine appears from the accounts given in Scripture, of the corrupt state of mankind by nature. They are said to be not only diseased and weak, but "to be dead in trespasses and sins;"\* to be not only blind, but "darkness" itself;† to be "natural" or animal men, who "do not receive, and cannot know, the things of the Spirit;"‡ to be "the servants of sin;"§ to be "the enemies of God,"|| who are not and cannot be subject to his law.¶ Now, if these things are true, how is it possible that men have free-

\* Eph. ii. 1.

§ Rom. vi. 17.

† Ib. v. 8, etc.

‡ Col. i. 21.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

¶ Rom. viii. 7.

will to good as well as to evil; that they possess a degree of moral power, which, by culture, may increase in strength, so as to change the current of their affections and actions; that with some assistance they can work out their salvation? It is not sufficient to open the eyelids of a blind person, to pour the full blaze of light upon his face; you must remove the impediment of vision, or form the organ anew. It is not sufficient to go to the grave of a dead man, and with a loud voice call upon him to arise; you must bring back his spirit from the invisible regions, and unite it again to his body. It is not sufficient to tell the slave, that his condition is wretched and degraded, and to awaken his natural desire for liberty; you must break his fetters, and rescue him from the power of his oppressor. The situation of the sinner is more hopeless than that of this man; for he is a willing slave, he hugs his chains, he thinks himself already free, and despises the liberty which the Gospel offers, as the most grievous bondage. There is, indeed, a difference between a person physically, and one morally dead. The body in the grave is destitute of all life, and has lost all its energies; while the sinner is still a rational being, and is capable of acts of understanding and will. But he is divested of every moral habit; he cannot discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner, nor choose what is spiritually good, till his natural powers be renovated and invigorated. Hence, "the light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not."\* Hence, although commanded and exhorted, and addressed by every argument, to return to the service of God, he refuses, till he be roused and persuaded by something of greater efficacy than the clearest demonstration, and the most impressive oratory which men can employ.

The necessity of almighty grace to the conversion of the soul, is farther evident from the terms which are used to describe its operations, as a creation, a resurrection, a new birth, the taking away of the heart of stone, and the giving of a heart of flesh. Surely something more is implied in such terms, than an external proposal of the truth, or such faint assistance, that it remains in our power to accept or reject it at our pleasure. If the words and phrases employed by the Holy Ghost have any meaning, they import such an exertion of Divine power as was made in bringing all things at first out of nothing, and in raising Lazarus or Christ from the grave; or is still made in the production of organized bodies out of pre-existing materials, and infusing into them a principle of life. How do such expressions agree with the notion, that God merely persuades us, as one man persuades another, by rational arguments; or, that he merely affords us a little help, as we give our arm to a person who is able to walk, but, labouring under a certain degree of weakness, might stagger and fall if he were left alone? How could he be said, upon this supposition, to create us, to raise us from a state of death, to give us a heart entirely new? It would not comport with the wisdom of God, whose design in the Scriptures is to give us just and accurate notions of his dispensations, to use expressions which obviously signify, that the work of converting sinners is wholly his own, while something very different is intended, and the truth is, that they convert themselves. If we would not cast a reflection upon him, as having spoken loosely, and in such a manner as to mislead us, we must conclude that a mighty and uncontrollable power is displayed in the regeneration of the soul. It is no objection, that sinners are commanded to "make" to themselves "a new heart, and a new spirit," to "repent and turn" to the Lord.† One passage of Scripture should be compared and explained in consistency with another; and we must therefore infer, that such commands do not suppose any power in man to obey them, but are intended to point out his duty, to declare, not what he can do, but what he ought to do, and what he

\* John i. 5.

† Ezek. xviii. 30, 31.



will do when God enables him by his grace. Upon this view of such commands, is founded the celebrated saying of Augustine in his Confessions : *Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis*, " Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt."

I may mention, as another proof, all those passages of Scripture which represent divine grace as necessary to the reception of the word; and consequently, the external call as insufficient to accomplish the end. The Psalmist prays, that God would open his eyes, to see wondrous things out of his law;\* and Paul, that God would give to the Ephesians the spirit of " wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ."† These prayers suppose something more than an external proposal of the truth, which David and the Ephesians already enjoyed, and would have been superfluous, if they had possessed, in their own minds, the power of spiritual discernment. Our Saviour is said to have opened " the understandings" of the disciples " to understand the Scriptures;"‡ not only to have explained the Scriptures to them, but to have enabled them to apprehend their meaning, by an internal operation on their minds. Lest, however, this passage should be supposed to refer to a miraculous illumination, intended to qualify them for the apostolical office, let me remind you of what is said of Lydia, that the " Lord opened her heart, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul."§ There was nothing in her case, which required a peculiar interposition, and we must therefore consider what was done to her, as done to all who are converted. The opening of the heart, or an exertion of divine power upon the understanding and the will, is necessary to dispose men to attend to the Gospel, and to receive it with faith. It is not the word itself which opens the heart, as if nothing more were necessary to conversion than the use of external means; but this is a work of God, distinct from the exhibition of the truth. The opening of the heart signifies the removal of the obstructions, whether arising from the prejudices or the influence of corrupt inclinations, and can be effected only by him, who " makes old things pass away, and all things become new." The distinction between the preaching of the word, and the application of it by divine power, is stated in other passages. " Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost."|| " I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."¶ If ministers are said to be workers together with God, it is only because they perform the external and subordinate office of preaching the word, and administering the other ordinances of religion. It is the Spirit of God who has access to the soul, and " turns it as the rivers of water."

In the last place, I may refer you to those passages of Scripture, which attribute to God an internal and immediate agency upon the soul in conversion, as when he is said to work in us " both to will and to do;"\*\* " to fulfil in us the work of faith with power;"†† to work in us " that which is well pleasing in his sight;"‡‡ to put his laws within us, and write them in our hearts;§§ to give us a new heart, and to put a right spirit within us, that we may walk in his statutes, and keep his judgments.|||| These expressions cannot be softened down, to mean only that he presents sufficient motives to incline our hearts to obey; or that he affords us such a degree of assistance, as may prove altogether ineffectual. There is an implied contrast between the mode in which men operate upon one another, and the action of God. They propose objects, and endeavour to fix the attention upon them, and to

\* Ps. cxix. 18.

† 1 Thess. i. 5.

‡‡ Heb. xiii. 21.

† Eph. i. 17.

¶ 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

§§ Ib. viii. 10.

‡ Luke xxiv. 45.

\*\* Phil. ii. 13.

|| Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

§ Acts xvi. 14.

†† 2 Thess. i. 11.

awaken activity by arguments and persuasives; but he moves and changes the heart.

We conclude, from these arguments, that as the external call is by the Word, the internal call is by the Spirit. The persons of the Godhead have each a peculiar province in the work of redemption. As it originated with the Father, on whose love the eternal purpose of saving sinners was founded, and was obtained by the obedience and death of the Son, so it is applied by the Holy Ghost, the author of spiritual wisdom, and faith, and holiness, and consolation. Hence, this office is expressly ascribed to him. He is called "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ."\* God promises, as we have already heard, to "put his spirit within us, that we may walk in his statutes, and keep his judgments, and do them."† In a word, we are said to be born of the Spirit. "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."‡

When our Lord taught this doctrine to Nicodemus, he did not understand it, and seems to have totally misapprehended the subject, so great was his ignorance of one of the first principles of religion, although he was a teacher among the Jews, or, the teacher, by way of eminence, as the original imports, in which he is called *ὁ διδάσκαλος*. "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"§ There is not the same gross misconception among Christians; but many of them wonder as much, when the necessity of regeneration is asserted, and may be addressed in the words of our Saviour,—“Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.”|| No man will wonder at the doctrine, who believes upon the authority of Scripture, and is convinced by experience, that human nature is wholly depraved. Admitting this principle, he will perceive that men must undergo a radical change, to qualify them for entering into the kingdom of heaven, and that it can be effected only by the almighty power of God. The doctrine gives rise to no dispute among those who are awakened to a just sense of their moral condition by nature. As they rejoice that God has promised to renew us after his image, and has for this purpose sent the spirit of grace, so it is their earnest prayer, that they may be the subjects of his operations, and thus be enabled to love and serve their Creator and Redeemer. The doctrine is opposed by cold hearted speculatists, by men full of prejudice and lofty notions of the dignity of human nature, who will not stoop to be absolute debtors to divine grace. Hence they make every effort, by wresting the Scriptures, and by an apparatus of sophistical arguments, to reserve to themselves, wholly, or in part, the glory of conversion, if they admit that there is such a thing. But all things are of God in redemption, as well as in creation. Every good thought, every devout emotion, every holy action, is the effect of his grace; for “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”¶

Nothing is a clearer proof of the alienation of man from God, than his reluctance to receive this doctrine, and others of a similar nature. The idea which we should naturally form of a holy and devout creature is, that he would feel his obligations to his Maker as benefits; that, with ineffable pleasure, he would render the due return of gratitude and praise for favours already conferred; and that, if I may speak so, he would open his soul to receive new communications of his goodness. But man, blinded by prejudices, elated with pride, admiring himself, and seeking his own glory, would break all the ties of dependence, and be the artificer of his own fortune in this world, and in the

\* Eph. i. 17.

† Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

‡ John iii. 5.

§ John iii. 4.

|| Ib. 7.

¶ Eph. ii. 10.



next. We cannot conceive an angel in heaven to be actuated by such sentiments and feelings; to balance accounts with his Creator, and to settle how much he owes to himself, and how much to the author of his being. This strange procedure is reserved for our world where the most helpless of all creatures, through a singular infatuation, boast of their powers; and, when the arm of Omnipotence is stretched out to assist them, deem their honour engaged scornfully to reject its aid. Such is the conduct of those who cavil at the doctrine of regenerating grace, and labour to prove, by an array of what they deem rational arguments, that man can attain, by his own efforts, the moral excellence which the Scripture pronounces to be the gift of Heaven.

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## LECTURE LXVI.

### ON THE APPLICATION OF REDEMPTION.

Farther Observations on the Spirit's Agency in Conversion—Divine Grace, its Mode of Operation and its Invincibility—Its Effect, Regeneration—The Change Implied in Regeneration, Illumination of the Mind and Renovation of the Will—Consequences.

THE application of redemption commences with the call of God, by which sinners are brought from a state of nature into a state of grace. This call is external by the gospel, in which salvation is offered to them, and they are invited and commanded to receive it; and internal by the Spirit, who persuades and enables them to comply. The former is ineffectual without the latter, as we showed from the corruption of human nature, which has sunk into a state of complete spiritual disability, and from the express and varied language of Scripture, which ascribes our conversion to the power of God, and represents its influence upon our minds and hearts as indispensably necessary to our cordial reception of the truth.

The many passages to which we referred obviously teach, that the true cause of the efficacy of the external means is, the invisible power of God silently influencing the soul. Unless the Scriptures were intended to mislead us by the use of figurative and hyperbolical language, which means much less than meets the ear, or means something very different from what the terms naturally suggest, there can be no doubt that our doctrine is legitimately deduced from them. It may be asked in what other manner the inspired writers would have expressed themselves, if it had been their acknowledged intention to teach that, besides the external call of the word, there is necessary the internal call of the Spirit, and that this consists in an exertion of power, the object of which is not merely to assist us, as if we possessed a certain degree of strength, but to perform the whole work, and to leave us only the office of concurring in its progress? Would they have made use of any other terms, or, in the whole compass of their vocabulary, could they have found terms more appropriate to their design, or which would have more definitely pointed out the exclusive operation of Omnipotence? What more could any person have said, who intended to signify that the spiritual change of the soul is the work, not of himself, but of God, than to call this change a creation out of nothing, and a resurrection from the dead?

We have seen that, notwithstanding the explicit testimony of Scripture, many attempts have been made to assign to men an important agency in the application of redemption. Pelagius, who denied original sin, attributed it

wholly to ourselves, and spoke of Divine grace only in deference to the phraseology of Scripture, and in compliance with the common language of Christians. When he said that God enlightens us by his heavenly grace, he meant nothing more than that he has given an external revelation. All are followers of Pelagius, who maintain that man is by nature possessed of a power to comply with the call of the gospel. Some talk of sufficient grace, and others of concursive grace, understanding in fact the same thing, namely, an ability given to all men to believe, so that those who do actually believe are not more indebted to God than unbelievers, but may take praise to themselves for having made a better use of their power; in direct opposition to Scripture, which declares that it is not of him that willeth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

We shall not be surprised at the attempts which have been made to bring forward man, as in whole or in part, the author of his salvation, if we reflect upon the pride of his heart, which prompts him, like our first parents, to aspire to be a God, possessing not only the knowledge of good and evil, but also the power to do the one as well as the other. To gratify this principle, Scripture is tortured and perverted, and is made to speak a language most foreign to its obvious design, and to the unquestionable sentiments of the writers. We may remark also in this, as in other cases, the unhappy influence of philosophy, falsely so called, upon the doctrines of revelation. The sentiments of the ancient sects of philosophers have been introduced into Christianity, and have produced the unhallowed compound of what is called rational theology. The power of man to make himself virtuous was held by them all: many professed disciples of Christ have chosen rather to adopt their proud and presumptuous conclusions, than to acquiesce in his humiliating lessons. When some divines talk of the human heart as the true source of virtue, and of the necessity of its originating in our independent choice, that it may possess the nature of virtue, we seem to be listening to a philosopher of the Porch, who described his good man as superior to the gods, because the latter were virtuous by nature, while the virtue of the former was derived from himself.

When we ascribe conversion to the grace of God, it is necessary to ascertain the meaning of the term *grace*, which, in Scripture, bears a variety of senses. It sometimes signifies the free favour of God, or his unmerited love, considered as the source of our salvation, and of all our blessings and privileges: "Who hath saved us, and called us according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."\* It signifies again the gospel, in which the love of God is revealed, and by which the blessings flowing from it are communicated. This is the saving grace of God, which "hath appeared to all men,"† and the grace of God, which we are exhorted "not to receive in vain."‡ Lastly, the term is used to denote the operation of Divine love upon the soul, as when Paul says, "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain."§ It is in this sense that we speak of the grace of God, when we call it the efficient cause of the conversion of sinners.

In speaking of spiritual things, we are often under the necessity of employing terms originally intended to express material objects, and we are always in danger of transferring to the former, ideas borrowed from the latter. The grace of God is sometimes spoken of, and sometimes probably conceived, as if it were something substantial, something distinct from, and inherent in the soul, like a portion of matter mingled with another, by which its qualities are corrected or changed. But it is manifest, upon the slightest reflection, that such notions are improper when applied to a spiritual subject. The grace of God must be understood to signify simply his power freely exerted to produce

\* 2 Tim. i. 9.

† Tit. ii. 11.

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 1.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 10.



a change in the moral state of the soul, or, by a metonymy, the change itself, the name of the cause being given to the effect.

It is not contrary to the analogy of nature, that the grace of God, as denoting the exertion of his power upon the soul, should be employed in the conversion of sinners. It is certain, from reason as well as from the express declarations of Scripture, that creatures are dependent upon their Maker for the continuance of their existence, and the exercise of their faculties. As the various parts of creation are linked together, and afford each other mutual support; as the heavens fertilize the earth, the earth supplies its inhabitants with food, its inhabitants propagate their kind, rear their offspring, and co-operate for the purposes of society; so the whole system is supported by the providence of God, as the Heathens acknowledged, when they represented it as suspended from the throne of Jupiter by a golden chain, and his energy as the primary cause of its movements. It is no objection that we cannot explain the manner in which God acts upon his creatures, if the fact is certain, that it is owing to his constant influence that we live, and think, and will, and move our limbs, and perform all our bodily and mental functions. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." There is no such difference between this case and the conversion of sinners, that we should hesitate to concede in the one what we admit in the other. If the influence of Providence in upholding, exciting, and directing us, is not destructive of our rational nature, I should wish to know upon what ground the influence of grace, in giving us new moral inclinations and habits, is supposed to be subversive of it. The operation of the power of God in regeneration, may be considered as of the same kind with its operation in providence, although it is exerted for a different purpose. Some, indeed, may choose to say that it is of a different kind, lest we should confound nature and grace, and represent grace only as nature carried to a higher degree of perfection. But this danger is imaginary. There are two powers in God; but his energy is one, and is distinguished by the objects on which, and the ends for which, it is exerted. It is the same power which creates, and upholds in existence: the same power which forms a stone and a sunbeam: the same power which gives vegetable life to a tree, animal life to a brute, and rational life to a man. In like manner, it is the same power which assists us in the natural exercise of our faculties, and enables us to exercise them in a spiritual manner. Hence it does not appear that there is any reasonable ground on which we should reject the doctrine of regenerating grace, any more than the doctrine of providential influence.

That the grace of God, in the application of redemption, is mighty, may be inferred from the effect. It is a change of the whole man, of his views, and principles, and inclinations, and pursuits. Now, this is a change which no means merely human have ever been able to accomplish. Not to mention the total failure of philosophy to reform mankind, or even in a single instance to inspire true virtue, we may remark, that the superior instructions, and precepts, and motives of Christianity, although employed with great diligence and earnestness, prove so often ineffectual, as to convince every person of reflection, that when they do take effect, their success should be attributed to a higher cause than their intrinsic excellence, or the eloquence of the teachers. The hand of God is clearly seen in the sudden, commanding, and lasting impressions which are often made upon the mind. When the thoughtless are compelled to think, and to think with an intenseness and seriousness which they never formerly felt; when the careless are in a moment affected with a sense of their most important interests; when the lips which were accustomed to blasphemy, learn to pray; when the proud assume the lowly attitude and language of the penitent; when those who were devoted to the world, give evidence that now the object of their desires and pursuits is a heavenly inheritance; and when

this revolution, so wonderful, has been effected by the simple word of God, and by the word which the subjects of this change had often heard before unmoved, we must be convinced that some mighty influence has been exerted, and that that influence is divine. Here, if anywhere, we perceive the finger of God. Hence his power is represented as displayed in the success of the Gospel: "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."\*

The power of God, exerted in the regeneration and conversion of sinners, is invincible. I make use of this term rather than the word irresistible, because, when the latter is taken in its natural import, it does not express what is the fact. Resistance is made to the grace of God, not only by the finally impenitent, but also by those who ultimately yield to it. In particular, when they begin to feel convictions of sin, they often endeavour to suppress them, or resort to improper expedients for relief; "going about" for example, "to establish their own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God."† In these instances, they are chargeable with opposition to grace. Those, therefore, who speak of irresistible grace, mean that it cannot be finally resisted; that it will overcome all the efforts of corrupt nature to counteract its design; and that it will ultimately render sinners obedient to the faith. But this idea is more properly expressed by the term, invincible. Man must submit in the end to the power of God; and this will be more evident, if we consider that his power is not only sufficient to compel the most refractory to yield, although with the greatest reluctance, but that it can take away the spirit of opposition, and so influence the hearts of men, that this submission shall be voluntary.

Were we to say that the grace of God is not invincible, we should be under the necessity of adopting the opinion, which we have already proved to be unscriptural, that there is a power in man to comply or not to comply with the call of the Gospel. We should take the work of conversion out of the hand of God, and commit it to man himself. After God had done all that he could do for our salvation, it would depend upon ourselves whether the intended effect should follow. Hence the result of the dispensation of the Gospel would be altogether uncertain. It would not be known beforehand whether all would believe, or all would disobey. If the grace of God was effectually resisted in one case, it might be effectually resisted in every case; and, consequently, although Christ shed his blood that he might bring sinners to God, and the whole economy of grace has been instituted with a view to carry the design of his death into effect, it might happen that not an individual of the human race would be saved. The very possibility of such an issue, by which the scheme of redemption would be frustrated, furnishes a strong presumption in favour of the doctrine, that the grace exercised in the conversion of sinners is not of such an equivocal character, that it may or may not accomplish its design, but that its operation is mighty and efficacious, bearing down all opposition, and "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

The great objection against the invincibility of Divine grace is, that it is subversive of the liberty of the will. It seems inconceivable to some, that a man should be free, and at the same time should be infallibly determined to a particular purpose. But, the objection proceeds upon a misapprehension of the mode of operation. The idea occurs of external force, by which a man is compelled to do something to which he is averse. It is not considered that the power of grace is not compulsive; that it puts no force upon our minds; that, instead of disturbing our mental constitution, it goes along with it; and that, in a manner at once natural and supernatural, it produces the concurrence

\* Ps. cx. 2, 3.

Rom. x. 3.



of the will. True liberty consists in doing what we do, with knowledge and from choice; and such liberty is not only consistent with conversion, but essential to it; for if a man turn to God at all, he must turn with his heart. God does not lead us to salvation without consciousness, like stones transported from one place to another; nor without our consent, like slaves who are driven to their task by the terror of punishment. He conducts us in a manner suitable to our rational and moral nature. He so illuminates our minds, as we shall afterwards see, that we most cordially concur with his design. His power, although able to subdue opposition, is of the mildest and most gentle kind. While he commands, he persuades; while he draws, the sinner comes without reluctance: and never in his life is there a freer act of volition than when he believes in Christ, and accepts of his salvation.

It is an important question on this subject, whether a sinner is merely passive in the first moment of his conversion, or his will co-operates with the grace of God? It will facilitate the answer to it, if we distinguish between regeneration and conversion. Those who, with Pelagius, deny original sin, and maintain that there is no depravity in us, but what has been contracted by our own acts, make regeneration to consist in a voluntary change and reformation of life; and therefore hold that man is a worker with God from the commencement of it. Indeed, according to this scheme, God merely commands him to reform, and he obeys by his own power. But, according to the Scriptures, regeneration is a change effected by *divine grace* in the state of the soul, the supernatural renovation of its faculties, the infusion of a principle of spiritual life. It is evident that, if this is a just definition, the sinner is passive; for, till divine grace is exerted upon him, he is incapable of moral activity, and, in the language of inspiration, is "dead in trespasses and sins." He is in the same situation with a man who is literally dead, and who, when lying in the grave, cannot contribute in any degree to the restoration of his life. He is like Lazarus, who had no concern in his own resurrection, knew not that our Saviour had come to his sepulchre to deliver him from death, and could not have obeyed the voice which called upon him to come forth, if the power which accompanied it had not brought back his spirit from the invisible world, and re-united it to his body. Regeneration is the effect of preventing grace, or of grace which precedes our endeavours, and operates alone. Conversion is the turning of the soul to God, and is expressed by our seeking the Lord, our coming to him, our forsaking our evil ways, and turning to him, and by other phrases which import activity, and allude to the motion of the body in changing its place. It obviously implies the exercise of repentance and faith, the love of God, and the choice of his service; and these are positive acts of the soul. In this view, the sinner co-operates with the grace of God. He does not aid grace or render it effectual by the exertion of his own natural power, but he yields to it, goes along with it, and works under its influence. Let it be carefully observed that, while we say that the sinner, although passive in regeneration, is active in conversion, we do not ascribe to him any independent activity, or represent any part of the work as properly his own. His province consists solely in concurrence. He acts because he has been acted upon. The motion of his soul towards God is the effect of the Spirit of life, who has entered into him, as the motion of the body is the effect of his inward resolutions. His conversion is, therefore, wholly of grace, that is, to grace are owing both the power to turn to God, and the actual exercise of that power; and his own convictions on this subject accord with the sentiments of Paul who says, "I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace which was in me."\*

Regeneration, I have said, is a change of the moral state of the soul, a renovation of all its faculties. It constitutes the sinner a new creature, not in respect of his essence, but of his views, and habits, and inclinations. It is the introduction of a new and powerful principle into the soul, under the influence of which its natural faculties are exerted in a different manner from that in which they were formerly employed; and in this sense, "old things pass away, and all things become new."\* Its thoughts are new, the objects of its choice are new, its aims and motives are new; and by this internal revolution, the external deportment is affected. The infusion of divine grace, like the ingrafting of a tree, alters, if I may speak so, the quality of the soul; so that, instead of the sour and crabbed fruits which it formerly produced, it now yields fruit of the most excellent kind, acceptable to God and to men. The instrument of the change, as we have already observed, is the Word of God; and the agent is his Spirit, who, moving as in the beginning of time upon the dark and turbulent mass, reduces it to order.

The first effect of divine power in the new, as in the old creation, is light. The regeneration of the soul commences with the illumination of the mind. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."† When our Saviour gave Paul a commission to the Gentiles, he sent him "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."‡ By the same means his own conversion was accomplished; for he tells us, that "when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood."§ This, indeed, must be the mode of procedure in every conversion, because God will always act upon us according to the nature which he has given us; and his purpose being to make us willing and obedient, there is no way in which it can be accomplished, but by the communication of clear and impressive views of truth to the mind. The Scriptures are a perfect revelation of the will of God, containing all the doctrines which we are required to believe, and all the precepts which we are bound to obey. But, although their instructions are full, plain, at least with respect to every essential point, and admirably fitted to arrest the attention and engage the heart, yet the human mind is so blinded by prejudices, so captivated and misled by the illusions of sense, and the maxims of worldly wisdom, that it either rejects the information which they bring, or contents itself with a cold and careless assent to it. An unrenewed man may have perused the Scriptures, and may have acquired such distinct notions of the subjects of which they treat, as to be qualified to be a teacher of others, but at the same time he does not perceive their real excellence, nor experience their spiritual efficacy. Hence it is evident that, while he remains under this mental incapacity, the intended effect of the word will not be produced, and that an operation is necessary, analogous to that performed upon the eyes of a blind man to admit the rays of light, or upon the eyes of a man whose vision is imperfect, to enable him to see objects distinctly.

The illumination of the mind does not consist in the discovery of unknown truths. To represent this as the design of it, would be derogatory to the fulness of the Scriptures, and would furnish those who are not converted, with the apology, that they do not possess adequate means, if there were some truths necessary to be known, which are not contained in written revelation. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;"|| that is, it is sufficient for conversion as an external mean, and there is no defect which needs to be supplied. Enthusiasts may talk of dreams and visions, and revelations, but

\* 2 Cor. v. 17.    † Ib. iv. 6.    ‡ Acts xxvi. 18.    § Gal. i. 16.    || Ps. xix. 7.



every sober-minded Christian can trace all his spiritual perceptions, and holy tempers, and devout feelings, to the records of the apostles and prophets; and if he was first awakened, or has been since impressed by the words of men, the sentiments which they conveyed were agreeable to the Scriptures, and were derived from them.

The illumination, therefore, of which we speak, consists in enabling those who are the subjects of it, to apprehend, in their true sense and importance, truths which they find in their Bibles, and which they may have often read before, without being affected by them, because there was "a veil upon their hearts." It is impossible to explain how this change of views is effected, because we know not the way of the Spirit; and impossible to make it intelligible to any man who has not experienced it. No person ever succeeded in an attempt to give a blind man an idea of colours. The regenerated themselves cannot tell how they were illuminated, or make others understand the specific difference between their present and their former conceptions. They may assure them that their views of truth were once obscure and uninteresting, and now are clear and enlivening; but such information is general and indefinite. One thing, however, they know, that whereas they were blind, now they see.

The sinner is enlightened in the knowledge of his own character and state; that, sensible of his guilt, and wretchedness, and danger, he may be prepared to accept the offers of mercy; in the knowledge of the love, and grace, and compassion of God, that he may be disposed to return to him, instead of hating, and dreading, and avoiding his presence; in the knowledge of Christ, of his substitution, and righteousness, and fulness, that he may trust in him for the supply of his wants, and, believing in him, may be restored to the favour of God. His views, indeed, upon all subjects are changed. He now is convinced of the evil of sin; he now feels the vanity of the world; he now appreciates the value of time; he now perceives the excellence of holiness; he now forms a just estimate of the realities of the invisible state. Divine illumination leads him to view things as they are, whereas he formerly contemplated them through the false medium of prejudice and misconception. He awakes, as from a dream, and finds himself surrounded with the solemn and interesting objects of religion. All Christians are "renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created them." "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord."<sup>\*</sup>

Having seen the effect of divine grace upon the intellectual part of our nature, let us proceed to consider the change on our moral and active principles. In giving an account of regeneration, it is usually observed, that the illumination of the understanding is followed by the renovation of the will. To renew the will is to incline it to good, to render it conformable to the will of God. This change is necessary, because the will is naturally rebellious, and its practical language is, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" It is, therefore, said, that "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;"<sup>†</sup> and how this is done we learn from an apostle: "It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The renovation of the will may be considered as the natural consequence of the illumination of the understanding. While we speak of different faculties of the soul, we should reflect that, strictly, these are only different modes in which the soul exerts itself. The understanding is the soul apprehending and contemplating; the will is the soul choosing or refusing: good is the object of its choice; and in order to secure a right determination, nothing more seems to be necessary than that the object should be presented in such a light,

<sup>\*</sup> Col. iii. 10. Eph. v. 8.

<sup>†</sup> Ps. cx. 3.

<sup>‡</sup> Phil. ii. 13.

as to obtain the deliberate and final decision of the understanding in its favour. Yet we remember the words of the poet, and their truth is too often confirmed by our personal experience.

Video meliora proboque,  
Deteriora sequor.

But although the heart may oppose, and often does oppose, slight and transient convictions of truth and duty, it does not follow that it will act the same part, when the evidence is full and irresistible, or when the word comes "in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power." As the understanding was intended to be the leading faculty of the soul, it may be conceived, when illuminated by divine grace, actually to lead it in that train and order which is pleasing to God. However, since we do not know how he acts upon the soul, nor to what extent his influence is necessary, it is more modest to avoid determining whether his agency upon the will is mediate or immediate, and to rest in the declarations of Scripture, that "he puts his spirit within us, and gives us a new heart, a heart of flesh."\*

The effect of regenerating grace extends to every power of the soul, and all its movements are controlled by it. The affections have been considered by some as various modifications of the will; but whatever philosophical theory we adopt with respect to them, they are all influenced by the change. They are refined, regulated, and directed to their proper objects. New feelings and emotions, new tendencies and exercises, are the native consequences of the new views of divine things, which have been communicated to the mind. The revelation of the Saviour in his righteousness and grace, accompanied as it is with a heartfelt sense of guilt, and wretchedness, and helplessness, gives rise to faith, or that act of the soul by which it receives his offered salvation, trusts in him for acceptance with God, and finds peace, and hope, and joy, in the contemplation of his character and work. Repentance is the effect of a clear and impressive apprehension of the infinite purity of the Divine nature, to which sin stands opposed as darkness is to light; of the goodness of God whom it has offended and dishonoured; and of his mercy in Christ, the serious consideration of which is sufficient to melt the hardest, and to subdue the most stubborn heart. Godly sorrow for sin, hatred of it, prayers for deliverance from it, a purpose instantly to forsake it, and the commencement of a course of resistance and mortification, are the ingredients or the fruits of repentance. The dislike of the human heart to God flows partly from misconceptions of his character, and partly from its own corrupt inclinations. Both are removed in regeneration, when the mind is enlightened, and the will is renewed. How is it possible that that man should not love God, to whom he appears the most amiable of all beings, and who is tasting that he is gracious? It would be tedious to give an enumeration of the emotions and affections which are excited in the heaven-born soul. All the fruits of the Spirit are produced, all his graces are imparted, and the heart of man, which was lately like a wilderness, overgrown with briars and thorns, is transformed into the garden of the Lord.

In treating of regeneration, it is strictly necessary to direct our attention only to the change which takes place in the state of the mind. It is here that grace operates, and here that the holy principles which it produces reside. But the seed being sown, the fruit will speedily appear. Reformation is not regeneration, but it will always be the result of it, when the conduct has been previously irregular; for "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;

\* Ezek. xxxvi, 26,



for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”\* The Corinthians were adulterers, fornicators, idolaters, covetous, and extortioners, before God called them by his grace; but they were “washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”† A change will even take place in the deportment of the most moral unconverted man, as soon as he is born from above. There are no gross sins, we will suppose, from which he needs to be purified; but he will become more spiritual in his conversation, more attentive to religious and relative duties, less eager in pursuit of the world, more scrupulous in the selection of his company, more cautious in avoiding the occasions of sin and appearances of evil. The eye of an attentive and practised spectator will perceive, notwithstanding his former fair show, that even he is become a new man. But it is in the secret recesses of his breast that he will be himself deeply conscious of the spiritual revolution. He will be sensible of a new temper of mind, or a new feeling as it may be called, in the performance of his duty; for whereas it was formerly a drudgery, it will now constitute his highest pleasure. Engaged in the service of God, he will find himself in his proper element; and instead of confining himself to the narrow round of duties in which he moved, while his sole aim was to maintain a decent appearance, or to silence the clamours of conscience, he will labour to be extensively useful to others, and unweariedly active for the glory of God. The praise of man is no longer the motive which stimulates his activity; another, of a purer and more exalted kind, has assumed its place; a desire for the approbation of his Maker. A reference to God in all his thoughts and actions, a regard to his authority, and love, compounded of esteem, gratitude, and desire for his favour and presence, are the principles by which he is governed. There is a lofty elevation of sentiment and affection above the standard of nature, however carefully improved. He is still in the world, but he is no longer of it; and although he attends to its affairs, and feels joy or sorrow from its changes, he gives the decided and habitual preference to nobler objects, and, like the ancient sojourners in Canaan, whose faith we are exhorted to follow, declares plainly, that he is seeking a country, even a heavenly one.‡

Regeneration is specifically the same in all who are the subjects of it; a spiritual change, the transformation of the soul into the image of God: “That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.”§ But, although every regenerated person is a new creature, and possesses all the constituent parts of the new nature, it is not necessary to maintain that, to all, the same measure of grace is communicated. They may differ from each other as children do at their natural birth, some of whom are much more lively and vigorous than others. Even at the commencement, God, according to his sovereign pleasure, may give more ample knowledge, stronger faith, and all the other virtues in a maturer state, to this man than to that. But there is no difference in respect of their state; the same work has been performed in them all, and they are all partakers of “that one Spirit.”

A change from darkness to light, and from sin to holiness, is necessary, not only to those who, having been educated in a false religion, must adopt new views and principles of action before they can be received into the communion of the church, and to those who, having lived long in the practice of vice, and acquired depraved habits, must reform before they can be acknowledged as Christians, but to all the descendants of Adam, whatever may have been their external advantages, and their previous character. No opinion is more unscriptural, than that there are some men who do not need to be regenerated. They may be well instructed in the principles of religion, and may be devout

\* 1 John iii. 9.

† 1 Cor. vi. 11.

‡ Heb. xi. 13—16.

§ John iii. 6.

and virtuous in the estimation of the world; they may observe divine ordinances, be just in their dealings, sober in their personal deportment, and distinguished by their deeds of beneficence. Such, however, were the Pharisees, whom our Saviour condemned with severity; and it was in reference to them, and to other persons who resemble them, that he reminded us that the outside of the cup may be clean, while within it is full of impurity. Human nature is the same in all men, although it is subject to various modifications from education, and temper, and the circumstances in which individuals are placed. Whether gentle or fierce, placable or unmerciful, licentious or temperate, selfish or benevolent, it is, according to the testimony of Scripture, carnal, alienated from God, and full of enmity against his law. The mildest and most amiable of mankind, therefore, stands in need of regenerating grace; and if he has not experienced its influence, is only a nominal Christian. With the aid of external advantages, he himself may change his conduct, but Divine grace alone can change his heart. Strange as this doctrine may seem to those who have studied the writings of philosophers more than the Bible, and mortifying as it is to our pride, it is unquestionably true. Our Lord made no exception when he said, "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."\* It is worthy of attention, that these words were addressed to a man who had received the circumcision of the flesh, had been brought up in the true religion, and was of so respectable a character, that he had been elevated to the rank of a ruler of the Jews. Hence it follows, that no man can be a disciple of Christ, unless he have undergone this spiritual change: "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature;"† but, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."‡

The change effected in the souls of men by regenerating grace, is the foundation of all their subsequent attainments in religion. I mean, that they are effects or consequences of it, as the growth of a vegetable, the rising of the stem, the formation of the buds and flowers, the opening of the leaves and blossoms, and the concoction of the fruit, are the effects or consequences of the living principle in the seed. Hence an apostle, having represented true Christians as the circumcision, or the regenerated, proceeds to state, that "they worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."§ To the performance of certain functions, certain powers are necessary; and there are properties belonging to one nature which no man expects to find in another. An animal without wings could not fly, without legs could not walk, without eyes could not see, without intellect could not understand. We never look for the peculiar properties of one species of animals in another; we never look, for example, for speech and reasoning among brutes. All the actions of a living being, and all its improvements, bear a relation to the nature originally given to it by its Maker. These things are obvious, not only to philosophers, but to every person of common sense; yet, although just reasoning requires that we should transfer them to religion, men often proceed in a different manner. Religion manifestly implies a different train of sentiments, and feelings, and actions, from those which are brought into operation by the ordinary business of life. Yet many imagine that, because man has understanding, and will, and affections, is capable of managing his worldly affairs, and of performing the duties incumbent upon him as a member of society, he is fully qualified to answer the demands of religion, and requires only to have his attention directed to it, and to be roused to the exercise of his powers. It is taken for granted, that religion is one of the original principles of our nature, which it is sufficient to direct and strengthen by discipline. It is supposed that men have a natural capacity or disposition

\* John iii. 5.

† 2 Cor. v. 17.

‡ Rom. viii. 9.

§ Phil. iii. 2.



for religion, and may be trained to habits of piety and virtue by external means. Amidst these speculations, the doctrine of human depravity is forgotten or denied, and hence it is not considered that, to attempt to educe religion from our nature as it is, is as absurd as to attempt to elicit the operations of intellect from an irrational animal. Holy actions must proceed from holy principles, and these must be created in the soul, which, since the fall, is barren of all good. Men must be regenerated before they can make progress in religion, or perform a single action which the Searcher of hearts will approve.

There are two states, in either of which every man is,—the one carnal, and the other spiritual; and his actions correspond to his state. The knowledge of a carnal man, is a cold light glimmering in his mind; his prayers are the service of the lips, or have only such animation as they derive from his natural fears and hopes; his praises are equally defective; his hearing of the Gospel is without faith, and his communicating without penitence and love; his obedience is a form without the substance. Every thing is the reverse in the case of the spiritual man; into whose duties, at least when his frame is good, there are infused the energies of a heart sanctified and moved by the spirit of grace. He prays and praises, and does all things in the Holy Ghost; he makes advances in holiness, and “his path is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”\*

These two states are essentially different; there is not a single point in which they meet, or touch each other. They are both predicable of human beings; but while the natural endowments of their respective subjects are the same in kind, their moral qualities are of opposite classes. The one is represented as in a state of non-existence, the other is in a state of being; and the change which has been effected upon the latter is called a creation. In the one state, men are dead, like those who are lying in the grave; in the other, they are alive, like those who were re-animated by our Saviour in the land of Judea, or like the saints at the last day, who will exchange corruption for incorruption. There may be an error in the conclusion which individuals draw with respect to themselves, and, from various causes, they may be unable to ascertain their own character with exactness; but between those who have, and those who have not, experienced regenerating grace, there is a radical distinction, and by the omniscient Judge they are never confounded. “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness.”†

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## LECTURE LXVII.

### ON THE UNION OF BELIEVERS TO CHRIST.

Union of Believers to Christ formed in Regeneration—Its Nature illustrated—It is real; spiritual; without confusion of persons; and indissoluble—Its Effects.

THE design of God in calling sinners by his word and spirit, is to bring them to himself by Jesus Christ, who is the only mediator between God and men, “the way, the truth, and the life.” As it is for his sake that God bestows the blessings of salvation upon us, so, according to his constitution, they can be enjoyed only in a state of connexion with him. This connexion, which is formed in regeneration, it shall be the business of the present lecture to explain.

\* Prov. iv. 18.

† 1 John v. 19.

There are two kinds of union between Christ and his people—a legal union, and a spiritual, or, as it is sometimes called, a mystical union. The reason of the latter denomination is, that the union is obscure or mysterious; but the term is not discriminative, because there are other unions to which it may be applied with equal propriety, as the union of the three persons in the God-head, and the union of the two natures of our Saviour. Notwithstanding, however, the generality of the term, its meaning is understood in theology, and it may continue to be used as custom has defined and limited it.

The legal union is that which was formed between Christ and his people, when he was appointed their federal head. It is a union in law, in consequence of which he represented them, and was responsible for them; and the benefit of his transactions redounds to them. It may be illustrated by the case of suretyship among men. A relation is formed between a surety and the person for whom he engages, by which they are thus far considered as one, that the surety is liable for the debt which the other has contracted, and his payment is held as the payment of the debtor, who is *ipso facto* absolved from all obligation to the creditor. A similar connexion was established between our Redeemer and those who are given to him by his Father. He became answerable for them to the justice of God; and it was stipulated that, on account of his satisfaction to its demands, they should receive the pardon of their sins. Neither could their sins have been imputed to him, nor could his righteousness have been imputed to them, if they had not been one in the eye of the law.

But something farther was necessary to the actual enjoyment of the benefits of his representation. God, on whose sovereign will the whole economy of grace is founded, had determined not only that his Son should sustain the character of their surety, but that a real, as well as a legal, relation should take place between them, as the foundation of communion with him in the blessings of his purchase. It was his will that, as they were one in law, they should be also one morally or spiritually; that his merit and grace might be imparted to them, as the holy oil poured on the head of Aaron descended to the skirts of his garments.

There are many passages of Scripture in which this connexion with Christ is represented as the foundation of our fellowship with him in spiritual and heavenly blessings. Thus, it is said that, as we were “chosen in him,” so we are “accepted in the beloved;” that in him we “obtain an inheritance,” and in him “are sealed with the holy spirit of promise;” that the church is his body, “and that we are baptized into Christ;” “that we are all buried with him in baptism,” “and are planted in the likeness of his death and resurrection; that “we are crucified with him,” and “live with him,” and that “he lives in us;” and that the earnest desire of every believer is to be found in him.\* These, and many similar expressions, denote a close relation between the Saviour and his genuine disciples; a relation more intimate than any which may be formed by external bonds.

This will be more evident, if we attend to some of the similitudes by which it is illustrated in Scripture. It is compared to the union between a tree and its branches, which constitute one whole, and possess the same principle of vegetable life: “I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”†—It is compared to the union between the building and the foundation by which it is supported: “To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living

\* Eph. i. 4, 6, 11, 13. Col. i. 24. Rom. vi. 3, 4. Col. ii. 12. Rom. vi. 5, 6, 8 Gal. ii. 20. Phil. iii. 9.

† John xv. 5.



stones are built up a spiritual house.”\*—It is compared to the union between husband and wife, who are one in the eye of the law, and have a mutual interest in the person and property of each other: “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church;”† that is there is a relation between Christ and the church, of which marriage is a figure. This similitude occurs in the forty-fifth Psalm, where our Saviour is represented as the king, and the church as the queen, standing at his right hand, in gold of Ophir.‡—It is compared to the connexion of the head and the members of the body, which receive life and nourishment from the head, and are directed and governed by it. “But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.”§ In these similitudes, not only is there a representation of the union of Christ and believers, and of the communion which takes place between them, but it is imported, that he is the primary source of their life, and strength, and perfection.

There are three great unions mentioned in Scripture, which are totally different in kind, and should therefore be carefully distinguished. The first is the union of the persons of the Trinity; but, although the union of which we are now speaking, is compared to it in the following words of our Saviour’s prayer, “that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us,”|| yet it is only a general resemblance, consisting in the unity of the members of the body of Christ. The persons of the Godhead have one numerical essence; whereas Christ and believers, in respect of nature, are distinct individuals. The second great union is that which subsists between the two natures of our Redeemer. They are not blended together, but are so closely conjoined, that there is only one person of Christ, and it may be said with truth, that the man is God, and God is man. But there is no such union between him and his people. And this leads me to remark, that the mystical union does not consist in community of essence, or in oneness of person, but in a close relation between different persons. It may be illustrated, but not fully, by the union between a chief or leader, and his faithful and devoted followers, who, although distinct individuals, are engaged in the same pursuits, and are animated by the same spirit, or by the same sentiments and feelings.

It is not fully illustrated, I say, by this, or by any other comparison of a similar kind. Thus, it would be a great mistake to suppose that there is no closer relation between Jesus Christ and his church, than that which subsists between a king and his subjects. This is the only relation which some persons admit. He gives his word, and ordinances, and laws to his people, and they acknowledge his right to govern them, and obey him. But although it should be added, that they feel all the warmth of a sincere attachment to him, yet, according to this opinion, he would be only the political head of the church; and the difference between its relation to him, and that of subjects to their sovereign, would consist solely in the nature of the sentiments and feelings of his followers, which are of a religious kind, and in the superior value of the benefits which they expect to receive from him. The doctrine of Scripture is, that he is the head, not only of government, but of influence; that the ties which connect him and his people are invisible and spiritual; and that the conjunction is so intimate, that he lives in them, and they live in him.

\* 1 Pet. ii. 4, 6. † Eph. v. 31, 32. ‡ Ps. xlv. 9. § Eph. iv. 15, 16. || John xvii. 21

The bonds of this union are, the Spirit and faith. The Spirit being in him and in them, makes them truly one. The distance between Christ who is in heaven, and believers who are upon earth, is no obstacle, because the Spirit is omnipresent. Through his intervention, not merely a figurative, but a real union is effected; there is one living principle in the head and the members: "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" with him.—"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink of that one Spirit."—"Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us." "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."\* There is much more implied in these words than the reception of the gospel, and the formation of a heavenly temper. They import the actual presence and inhabitation of the Spirit himself. The fact is plainly asserted; but it is mysterious, and cannot be distinctly explained. It may be observed, in order to prevent misconception, that the presence of the Spirit with any individual, is not analogous to the presence of one man with another. He who is willing to give his company to another, goes to the place where the other is, and, while associating with him, separates himself from those whom he does not choose to admit to the same intimacy. The coming and inhabitation of the Spirit must be understood in a different manner, because, being a Divine Person, he is omnipresent; and, consequently, as he is incapable of change of place, he cannot withdraw from one man, and approach to another. In respect of his essence, he is as much present with unbelievers as with believers. His dwelling in the latter must therefore signify, that he manifests himself in their souls in a peculiar manner; that he exerts there his gracious power, and produces effects which other men do not experience. Without knowing him, or being aware of his influence, other men are sustained by his power, and enabled to exercise their natural faculties; for we must conceive him to be the source of life and activity throughout the whole intelligent creation; but the regenerated are the subjects of a peculiar work, by which they are transformed into the image of God. We may illustrate his presence with them, as distinguished from his presence with men in general, by supposing the vegetative power of the earth to produce, in the surrounding region, only common and worthless plants, but to throw out, in a select spot, all the riches and beauty of a cultivated garden. By the fruits of the Spirit in the heart and life of an individual, it is known that he is working silently, but powerfully, within him. Where love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, and temperance are found, there he has taken up his abode. In this way we may understand the inhabitation of the Spirit, and it seems to be the only rational idea which we can form of it. It is impossible to conceive any peculiarity in respect of his essential presence in the case of the regenerated, for he necessarily fills all places and all persons. But he works when and where he will, and is said to enter into the soul, when he begins to exert his gracious operations in it, as God is said to come to the assemblies of his people, and to dwell in Zion, because he there manifests his glory, and dispenses the blessings of his grace.

The principal bond of union between Christ and his people, is the Spirit. But, as the union is mutual, something is necessary on their part to complete it; and this is faith. Hence, Christ is said to dwell in our hearts by faith. This faith is not merely a natural act of the mind, assenting to the truth of the gospel, as it assents to any other truth, upon credible testimony; but it is a supernatural act, an effect produced by the power of the Spirit of grace, and is such a persuasion of the truth concerning the Saviour, as calls forth exercises

\* 1 Cor. vi. 17. xii. 13. 1 John iii. 24. iv. 13.



suitable to the nature of its object. It is a cordial approbation of the Saviour, a hearty consent to his offers, an acceptance of him in his entire character, as "made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."\* Strictly, faith is an act of the understanding alone, and thus logicians would define it; but whatever is the abstract meaning of a term, we should observe whether it is used by a writer in a peculiar sense, and accommodate ourselves to his ideas, instead of rigidly adhering to our own. Here some expounders of the sacred oracles err, and explain them according to the standard of philosophy, instead of allowing them to explain themselves. If we carefully attend to the use of the word faith, in the Scriptures, we shall find that it often signifies more than an assent of the mind, and implies the concurrence of the will, or an exercise of the heart, embracing the truth believed, and trusting in the object revealed. When thus understood, it will appear to be a fit instrument for completing our union to Christ, although it might be difficult to perceive how it could have this effect, if it were merely an assent. The Scriptures, in describing faith, represent it by a variety of bodily motions and actions, to express its activity. It is called "a coming to Christ,"—"a receiving of him,"—"an eating of his flesh, and a drinking of his blood." When man believes with the heart, he obtains an interest in the object of his faith. Christ becomes his, according to the constitution and promise of God. He enters into covenant with him; and while he takes him as his Saviour, he devotes himself to him as one of his people. Thus the union is formed by mutual consent. Our Redeemer expresses his consent, not only in his gracious offers and declarations, but also by sending the Spirit to dwell in his heart, and the Christian expresses consent by his faith. "My Lord and my God," is its language. "Lord, I am thine; save thou me." If we consider the Song of Solomon, as intended to describe this union, and the intercourse founded upon it, the following words of the church are apposite to the present subject—"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."†

From this account, it appears that it is in truth, and not merely by a figure of speech, that Jesus Christ and his disciples are said to be one. They are one, not only in sentiment and affection, by consent of mind and heart, as Nestorius is reported to have explained the union of the two natures of our Saviour, and Socinians the union of the Father and the Son, but by a real conjunction, their persons being united to his person. The reality of the union is manifest from the similitudes by which it is illustrated; for the stones are a part of the building, the branches a part of the vine, and the members a part of the body. The Spirit of Christ actually dwells in the souls of believers, and, by faith, they receive not only the benefits of Christ, but himself. Hence he is said to live in them, and they are said to abide in him. Some men treat the idea of such a union with ridicule; in their opinion, it is a dream of enthusiasm; and they confound it with the wild notions of the mystics, pronouncing what they do not see, and cannot feel, and have not experienced, to be the baseless fabric of a vision. But the humble Christian is content to believe the testimony of Scripture, and cannot withhold his assent to a fact, of which, although he is unable to explain it, the evidence which he finds in himself is conclusive. He who is led by the Spirit, enlightened, assisted, and comforted by him, cannot doubt that Christ dwells in his heart.

Let it be observed, in the next place, that it is a spiritual union. It is on this account that it is difficult to conceive it, and by some it is rejected as imaginary. Influenced as we are by our senses, we are apt to think of it as being like the union of two material substances, by juxta-position, or by commixture; or, if we study more refinement, we may suppose it to be only like

\* 1 Cor. i. 30.

† Sol. Song. vi. 3.

the union of two friends, in mind and affection. But, as the former union is too gross, so the latter, as we have seen, falls short of the truth. As every corporeal idea should be carefully excluded, so we must elevate our conceptions higher than the most intimate connexion which can be formed between two individuals, by the operations of intellect and will. The same Spirit lives in our exalted Redeemer, and in his people upon earth; and hence, although separated from him, and from one another, they are but one. It may seem strange to illustrate a fact by a mere creation of fancy; but if you should conceive a body composed of many parts, and those parts to be disposed of in different and distant places, but to be animated and moved by the same principle of life, you would have some idea of the union of the members of the church to Christ, and to one another, although dispersed over the face of the earth. In this case, the union would not be local, but spiritual, as it is in the other.

I remark again, that this union is without confusion. It is a union of persons, which imports, that the parties concerned in it, continues as much distinct individuals as before. There is no communication of the properties of one to another; they are, in every respect, what they were, except that the Spirit of Christ, who is in the souls of his people, exerts an influence upon them, by which their moral nature is renewed. Incautious language has been sometimes used in speaking upon this subject. Gregory Nazianzen has employed the two terms *θεοποιον*, and *χριστοποιον*, as if the saints were *deified*, or *christified*. What his meaning was, I pretend not to say; perhaps he intended only to express strongly the closeness of the relation, and the intimacy of the communion founded upon it; but when we do not rigidly adhere to the words of truth and soberness, they mislead others, and suggest false notions to them, into which they were in no danger of falling themselves. Such language prepared the way for the extravagancies of the mystics, who, in more modern times, have not scrupled to use the phrases of being “goddied in God,” and other expressions equally wild. But, although the union is stricter than any human relation, it has its limits, necessarily arising from the nature of the parties. As our Saviour cannot participate in the infirmities of his people, except by sympathy, so they cannot participate in his divine excellencies, which are incommunicable. Christ and they are truly united, but there does not result a unity of essence, or of person; for it is not effected immediately, but through the intervention of the Spirit, and, consequently, there is no confusion of nature or persons, so that Christ is incarnate in believers, or they are deified in him.

Lastly, this union is indissoluble. We must not imagine that a man may be in Christ to-day, and out of Christ to-morrow. The union could be dissolved only by his act or by ours. There is no reason to apprehend that he will dissolve it; because he is not fickle in his attachments, apt to be disgusted, and easily irritated, but having a gracious design to accomplish, will persevere till it be completed. Those whom he loves, he loves to the end. It will not be dissolved by any act of his people. They, indeed, have inconstant hearts, and, from their own changeableness, or from the influence of external temptations, they might renounce their connexion with him: but, as he prays that their faith may not fail, so the Spirit, dwelling in their hearts, preserves it amidst the dangers to which it is exposed. There may, indeed, be a temporary apostasy from Christ, in consequence of the decline of grace, or the suspension of the activity of the spiritual principle. We have an example in Peter, who disowned his Master, and disclaimed, with the most solemn asseverations, the character of his disciple. But even then he had not utterly lost faith; and the impressive look by which he was awakened to repentance, as well as the affectionate treatment which he afterwards experienced, showed



that, notwithstanding his unworthy conduct, Jesus had not rejected him. We are borne out by the Scripture in maintaining, that the saints cannot fall totally or finally from grace. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."\* The design of the apostle is not to inform us, that external violence cannot dissolve the union of believers to Christ, for on this point there is no ground of apprehension; but to give an assurance, that it never shall have such influence upon the minds of the saints as to prevail upon them to forsake him. His grace will keep them in the evil hour, and enable them to hold out to the end. "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."† Death will break all other ties, and separate the soul from the body; but this union will not be affected by the fatal stroke. The soul will rise to heaven, and enter into the immediate presence of Christ, to enjoy more intimate fellowship with him, than was permitted in this sublunary state. The body, although lifeless, and corrupted, and reduced to dust, will still be a part of his mystical body. It is united to him even in the grave, as his human nature was united to the divine, notwithstanding the temporary separation of his soul and his body. The saints are said to "die in the Lord," and to "sleep in Jesus;" and ages after their death, God announced himself as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.‡

The sacraments of the new covenant are signs and seals of this union. With respect to baptism, this is evident from the words formerly quoted: "By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body."§ The subject of which the apostle is speaking, is the union of believers to the body of Christ, and consequently to Christ himself; and while he represents it as effected by the baptism of the Spirit, he unquestionably alludes to the baptism of water as the sign. There is the same reference to this ordinance, when we are said to be "baptised into Christ."|| The sprinkling of water in his name and by his authority, imports the application of his blood, and the communication of his spirit to the soul; in other words, it imports that we are brought into such a relation to him, that we have fellowship with him in the benefits of his death; and of this fellowship union is the basis. We must first be in Christ, before we can be blessed with all spiritual blessings, as the branch must be in the vine, before it can partake of the juice which ascends from the root. The Lord's supper has the same signification. "We are one body," Paul says to Christians, "for we are all partakers of that one bread."¶ Their joint participation of that bread is an emblem of their union, or shows that they compose one holy society having common feelings and interests. Now, if their fellowship with one another in this ordinance is a token of their union among themselves, it still more clearly demonstrates their union to Christ, as he is exhibited under the sacred symbols, which they take and use. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"\*\*\* The acts of taking and using the elements, are expressive of certain acts of the mind. They are expressive of faith, by which Christ is received, and which we have seen is the bond, on the part of the believer, by which he is united to him. The symbols of the incarnate suffering Redeemer are incorporated with our bodies by the process of digestion; and although this is not an exact representation of the union, in which it has been shown there is no confusion or commixture of the parties, yet it is undoubtedly intended to remind us of the closeness of the connexion, by which those who were originally separate are brought

\* Rom. viii. 35, 37.

† John x. 28.

‡ Rev. xiv. 13. 1 Thess. iv. 14. Exod. iii. 6.

§ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

|| Gal. iii. 27.

¶ 1 Cor. x. 17.

\*\*\* 1 Cor. xi. 16.

together, and conjoined in the most intimate bonds. To the eye of a careless spectator, the sacraments of the church may appear mere ceremonies, which are of little use, and have little meaning. But they are emblematic of one of the most important facts in the Christian religion. They are visible signs of an invisible relation, upon which the enjoyment of all spiritual privileges and blessings depend. They attest that, although Jesus Christ is in heaven, and his followers are upon earth, yet distance of place does not divide them; for that he is present with them as he is not present with the world; that he is as near to them as are the elements which are applied or received into their bodies, and that he works as efficaciously in their souls as these do in their bodies.

Among the consequences or effects of this union, we may mention, in the first place, that all who belong to Christ are possessed of spiritual life. He said to his disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also,"\* and he fulfils his word by the inhabitation of the Holy Ghost. By nature they "are dead in sin;" but they are "quickened together with him,"† that is, in connexion with him, and after the example of his resurrection. As in the natural body the head is the seat of sensation, and feeling and motion are communicated to all the members by means of the nerves, which have their origin in the brain; so from him flow those influences, by which believers are endowed with moral sensibility, and perform the various functions of the Christian life. "I live," says Paul, "and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."‡ Observe how careful he is, when he represents himself as living, to put us on our guard against supposing that this state was owing to himself, and to refer his spiritual power and activity to the Saviour, who dwelt in him, and from whom he derived constant assistance by the exercise of faith. Grace in the most eminent state, if it were left alone, would fail, like the water of a stream which is supplied only by occasional showers; but connected as it is with Christ as its source, it is like a stream from a perennial spring which always flows, although it may sometimes swell, and at other times sink. "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life."§

The second effect of their union to Christ, is their communion with him in all the benefits which he purchased. "Ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power."|| Being united in him, they enjoy an interest in his righteousness, by which he fulfilled the law in their room, and are thus entitled to the blessings of justification. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."¶ Hence Paul "counted all things but dung that he might win Christ, and be found in him, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith."\*\* They are adopted into the family of heaven, and made heirs of God, and joint-heirs with his Son Jesus Christ. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name."†† They are sanctified in soul, body, and spirit, being enabled by his grace to die more and more unto sin, and to live unto righteousness. "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."‡‡ The outlines of the divine image, which were drawn upon their hearts in regeneration, are gradually filled up, or, in the language of an apostle, "they are changed into it from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."§§ Lastly, they are glorified together with him, in whom, as their head, they now sit in

\* John xiv. 19.

‡ Col. ii. 10.

†† 1 Cor. vi. 11.

† Eph. ii. 5.

¶ Rom. viii. 1.

§§ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

‡ Gal. ii. 20.

\*\* Phil. iii. 8, 9.

§ John iv. 14.

†† John i. 12.



heavenly places. Of God he is made to them redemption, which imports deliverance from every evil, and introduction into a state of perfect and eternal felicity.

The last effect of their union to Christ which I shall mention, is their union to one another. They are one body, because they are partakers of that one Spirit. They compose a society closer and more compact than can be formed by civil institutions, or a community of interests, or the endearments of friendship. They were born in different countries, they speak different languages, they are engaged in different temporal pursuits, and are distinguished from each other by natural temper, education, condition, and other particulars; but they are like the parts of a complicated machine, which are not only externally joined together, but are acted upon by one mainspring, and perform one harmonious movement. They are united in their views of divine truth. They all believe the depravity of human nature, the divine character and atonement of the Saviour, the necessity of supernatural grace to renew and sanctify the soul. Their modes of expression on certain points may be different, but their faith is substantially the same. If there are some particulars in which they do not agree, they are inferior matters, (although unenlightened zeal may magnify their importance,) of which a man may be ignorant, and not only be safe, but enjoy uninterrupted communion with God. As they have one baptism, so they have also one faith. They are united in love. We sometimes see, it must be acknowledged, persons of whom we entertain a favourable opinion, keeping at a distance from, and even opposing one another. In certain cases there may be good reasons for this conduct, because one of the parties is not walking according to the gospel; but it does not always admit of this apology. Being imperfect, even saints sometimes fall out by the way without any sufficient cause, and sometimes their disputes originate in mistake. They do not know one another; they contend in the dark; they suppose the friends to be the enemies of truth. But one saint never hates another knowing him to be a saint. He loves the image of Christ wherever he perceives it, and loves every man in whom it appears. So far as the disciples of Christ do know one another, they dwell together as brethren in unity, overlooking minor differences for the sake of great points on which they are agreed, and their common relation to the Saviour. In a word, they are united in design. Animated by one Spirit, they have the same end in view, the glory of their Saviour, who died that they should not live to themselves, but to him. Hence we see their zeal awakened, and their powers called into action, by any object which will conduce to accomplish this design. If a spark be struck out, it increases into a flame, which spreads with rapidity from breast to breast, and from country to country, till the whole Christian world is illuminated and warmed by it. We have an example in the schemes which are at present carried on for the circulation of the Scriptures, and the propagation of the gospel; and in which Christians of all denominations, laying aside party feelings, most cordially combine their counsels and their efforts. Thus, the prayer of Christ is answered, that his disciples may be one; and we look forward to the time when the union will be more complete, and more widely extended; when "there shall be one Lord, and his name shall be one," and when this prophecy shall be fulfilled, "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."\*

The honour to which believers have been admitted by their union to Christ should excite their gratitude and their admiration of his condescension and grace. "What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?"† "Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth?"‡

\* Is. lii. 8.

† Ps. viii. 4.

‡ 2 Chron. vi. 18.

They should firmly and constantly adhere to him by faith, for he is their life and strength; and their peace, comfort, and progressive sanctification depend upon the continuance of their relation, and the assiduity of this fellowship with him. "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus."\* In a word, they should walk worthily of their high privilege, and guard against everything which has a tendency to separate them from him, and to impede their intercourse with him. Sin is infinitely offensive to him, and is contrary to the design with which he has united them to himself. As he who hath called them is holy, so they should be holy in all manner of conversation. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own: For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's."†

## LECTURE LXVIII.

### ON FAITH.

Faith the Bond of Union to Christ—Different kinds of Faith—Saving Faith; its nature and qualities—Justifying Faith defined and explained—Is Assurance of the Essence of Faith?

In illustrating union to Christ, I have shown that the bond on our part, by which we are connected with him, is faith. It is a fruit of the spirit of regeneration; and although the soul which he has quickened begins immediately to exert itself in all the acts of spiritual life, yet faith is eminently entitled to attention, because it receives Christ, and has a direct and powerful influence upon our peace, and comfort, and sanctification. Much as it is undervalued by many, it is of indispensable necessity in religion; and while the question has been foolishly proposed, whether faith or morality is preferable, the truth is, that the idea of separating them should not be admitted for a moment; and that, as faith without morality is a mere pretence, so morality without faith is worth nothing.

Different kinds of faith are enumerated by theological writers, and are mentioned in Scripture. The first is called historical faith, which is a simple assent to the truths of revelation, and may be found in unregenerated men, who are sometimes said to believe. It receives this denomination, not because its object is limited to the histories of Scripture, for it comprehends also the doctrines, but because it is an assent of the same kind which we give to any credible history, and is a simple act of the understanding. This is the only faith which is produced by a rational demonstration of the truth of revelation: and hence we may observe by the way, that those ministers who dwell much upon the evidences of religion, are chargeable with mispending their time; because, in the first place, those whom they usually labour to convince, entertain no doubt of Christianity; and, in the second place, although they should succeed in establishing conviction in the minds of their sceptical hearers, they would make them only such believers as were Simon Magus and many others, who perished in their sins. The second, which is called temporary faith, consists in such a persuasion of the truths of religion as is accompanied with some impression upon the conscience and affections. Of this kind is the faith.

\* 2 Tim. ii. 1.

† 1 Pet. i. 15. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.



of those whom our Lord compares to the seed which fell upon stony ground, and hastily sprang up, but soon withered away. It has no root; it does not proceed from a mind enlightened, and a heart renewed by the spirit; and hence, when it is exposed to a severe trial, it fails. "When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the truth, by and by they are offended."\* On this account it is called temporary faith, although in some instances it may last long, and, like the hope of the hypocrite, perish only at death, because, during the course of life, no cause occurred of sufficient force to extinguish it. The third kind of faith is called the faith of miracles; by which is meant, a persuasion supernaturally wrought in the mind of the person, that God would perform some miracle by him, or for him. Of the former persuasion our Lord speaks, when he says to his disciples, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."† To the latter persuasion he refers, when he said to two blind men, who besought him to have mercy on them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?"‡ and it was found in the cripple at Lystra, of whom it is related, that Paul "perceived that he had faith to be healed."§ It is evident that this kind of faith was confined to particular persons, and a particular period of the church, and consequently is not a subject of general interest. The last kind of faith is called saving faith, because by it the salvation offered in the Gospel is received and enjoyed. It is the design of this lecture to explain it,—first, in general, as it respects the whole of divine revelation; and, secondly, in particular, as it respects the offer of pardon and eternal life through the Saviour. In this view, it is commonly called justifying faith.

In speaking of faith in general, I shall direct your attention to the definition of it, which is given by Paul in the first verse of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith, whether human or divine, is the belief of a testimony. The faith which we are now considering, is the belief of the testimony of God. How it operates in reference to the subjects of this testimony, whether they be considered simply as invisible, or as both invisible and future, the apostle explains in the words which we have quoted. Of things hoped for, or future good, it is the substance. Concerning the import of the original term—*ὑπόστασις*—translated *substance*, there has been a good deal of discussion, and it has been understood to signify confidence or subsistence. Faith is the confidence of things hoped for; because it assures us not only that there are such things, but that, through the power and faithfulness of God, we shall enjoy them. It is the substance of things hoped for; because it gives them, although future, a present subsistence in the minds of believers, so that they are influenced by them as if they were actually present. Thus the word was understood by some of the Greek commentators, who were the most competent judges of its meaning. "Since things which we hope for," says Chrysostom, "seem not to subsist, faith gives them subsistence, or rather it does not give it, but is itself their substance. Thus, the resurrection of the dead is not past, nor does it subsist, but faith gives it subsistence in our souls." "Faith," says another, "gives subsistence to the resurrection of the dead, and places it before our eyes." In human hopes there is a mixture of uncertainty; and reason itself will, in many cases, justify anxiety; but the foundation of Christian hope being the word and promise of God, the doubts which may arise in our minds are the consequences of the weakness of our faith; for, if our faith corresponded with the nature of the testimony, we should be as fully assured of what is future, as we are of what is present or past.

\* Matt. xiii. 21.

† Ib. xvii. 20.

‡ Ib. ix. 28.

§ Acts. xiv. 9.

The objects of faith are not only future good, but invisible things, both good and evil, which are made known by divine revelation; and of these it is the evidence, *εἰς ἃς*, the *demonstration* or *conviction*. By our senses we become acquainted with the material world; by consciousness we are assured of the existence of our souls and their various faculties; and by reasoning we deduce one truth from another. But, besides these sources of information, a great part of our knowledge is derived from testimony. Thus, we know that there are cities and countries which we never saw; that events have happened at which we were not present; that certain persons lived in former ages, and performed certain actions; and that there are persons now alive who have not come within the sphere of our observation. Although there is a difference between the evidence of demonstration and the evidence of testimony, yet, in particular circumstances, there is no difference in the conviction produced; for no person in his senses entertains any more doubt that there is such a country as Greece or Italy, although he has not travelled from home, than he does of a proposition in mathematics which he fully comprehends. We depend upon testimony in matters of commerce and science, in all our ordinary transactions, and even in the important concerns of life and death. "If then we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater."\* In the latter case, there is no possibility of mistake or deception. Besides, his testimony relates to many things of the utmost importance, with respect to which man could give us no information,—things which eye had not seen, ear had not heard, and it had not entered into the heart of man to conceive. Of these, faith is the evidence or demonstration. Being past, and future, and invisible on account of their distance from us, or the spirituality of their nature, they cannot be discovered by our senses; but the conviction of their reality is as strong in the mind of a believer, as if they were placed before his eyes.

This is a general account of faith, according to the definition of Paul; but, with a view to illustrate its nature more fully and distinctly, I request your attention to the following observations.

First, The objects of religion are invisible and future, and hence arises the indispensable necessity of faith. The objects with which worldly men are conversant, are present, or are considered not very distant; they are, or are expected soon to come, under the cognizance of their senses. Nothing seems to them to be important, which may not be seen, and felt, and enjoyed, in this sublunary state. If there be any thing which does not fall under this description, any thing which cannot be made subservient to the purposes of the present life, they regard it as a nonentity, or as a matter with which they have nothing to do. Christians are deemed enthusiasts or fools, who neglect the substance, and grasp at a shadow, dreaming of another world, which no man ever saw, instead of labouring to make themselves comfortable in this. In a certain sense, indeed, the things of this world are the objects of religion, because it regulates our conduct and affections in reference to them; but the motives by which it influences our minds, are derived from the invisible state, and the reward, to which it teaches us to aspire, lies beyond the narrow boundary of time and sense. A Christian is a citizen of the Jerusalem above; his conversation is in heaven; he looks at the things which are not seen, and eternal; he declares plainly, that he is seeking a country, even a heavenly one; he obeys the exhortation, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."†

In the second place, Of those objects with which religion is conversant, we can have no knowledge but by Divine revelation. It is on this account that they are objects of faith. We believe that they exist, upon the testimony of God.

\* 1 John v. 9.

† Col. iii. 2, 3.



It may be supposed that this statement of the source of religious knowledge is not strictly true, for that some parts of it, at least, are discoverable by reason. By reason, we demonstrate the existence of God and infer a future state, in which men will be rewarded according to their works; but, without inquiring how far unassisted reason would advance in its researches, it is certain that, with respect even to these fundamental truths, it is to revelation alone that we are indebted for those views of them, which are the proper objects of religion. It is from revelation that we have derived the knowledge of that character of God, with which we, as sinners, are concerned. It is revelation which informs us that he is love; that he is merciful, and ready to forgive; that he has given his only-begotten Son for the salvation of the world; and that whosoever believes in him, shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. On these important subjects nature is silent; reason says nothing, because it is profoundly ignorant: they were so far from being suggested by meditations of the human mind, or according with its natural conceptions, that when they were first proposed, they were derided as folly. With respect to a future state, although the heathens entertained some obscure notions of it, for which, however, it is probable they were indebted more to tradition than to reasoning, it does not admit of a doubt that, without revelation, we should not have had the faintest idea of the heaven of Christianity, and should have known nothing concerning the means by which admission into it is obtained. It is the unrivalled glory of Jesus Christ, that "he hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."\* Our religion is a free gift of God to our sinful race. It originated in the purpose which he purposed in himself before the beginning of time, and into which no man or angel could have pried; it is delivered to us in the Scriptures, which were not written by the will of man, but at the suggestion, and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit; and like some other gifts of God, it has not yet been imparted to all men, but, in the exercise of his sovereignty, has been granted to one nation, and withheld from another.

In the third place, Faith is an assent to the revelation which God has made of the truths of religion. We assent to a testimony, when we are persuaded of the veracity of the testifier, into which our faith is resolved. But, while this is a general definition of faith, it varies its aspect, if I may speak so, according to the subject of the testimony. When the testimony relates to a matter of indifference, a fact in which we take no interest, the assent is very slight, and may be called simple belief. But if the subject come home to our business and bosoms, a stronger impression is made. When a person, for example, is in distress or danger, and the testimony informs him of some generous friend, who is both able and willing to deliver him, and is exerting his power for his relief, the act of the mind rises higher than simple belief, and is properly denominated trust or confidence. If we are looking forward with desire to an object, the possession of which will make us happy, and the testimony assures us that we shall obtain it, expectation is added to desire, and both united constitute hope. When we attend to the nature of the Christian religion, and consider that the subjects of which it treats are of infinite importance, that it exhibits the character of God in its grandest and most interesting features, displays all the miracles and blessings of redemption, and directs our views to the realities of eternity, we perceive that the faith which it demands must be very different from a cold naked assent. It being admitted, that a faith corresponding to the nature of the things revealed, implies the concurrence of the heart, as well as the conviction of the understanding, it will be easily conceded that its existence is rare. There are many who profess to believe the Gospel, and who do

believe it in this sense, that they entertain a vague and confused notion of its truth; but their faith is merely a careless passive assent. They have been told that it is true, and perhaps have given attention to the evidences by which its truth is established, and they feel no disposition to call it in question. There is no particular reason why they should controvert the evidence, because they regarded the subject as a mere speculation, which they are under no necessity of reducing to practice; there are several reasons which incline them to yield to it, as the prejudices of education, the wishes of their friends, a regard to character and to their worldly interests. They do not enter into a close examination of the subject, nor institute an inquiry whether their assent be sincere and cordial. They are not infidels in the common acceptation of the word, and therefore they are believers. But their faith is totally different from a practical conviction. It has no influence upon their hearts; and were they tried by the standard of Scripture, or even by the laws of reason and common sense, it would be found that they do not really believe those truths, of which they probably think that they never entertained a doubt.

In the fourth place, Faith conveys to the mind a full conviction of the truths of religion. It is the substance, or confident expectation of things hoped for, the evidence or demonstration of things not seen. The ground of this conviction of the existence, and nature, and importance of its objects, is the infallible testimony on which it depends. What God has attested must be true, because, being omniscient, he cannot be mistaken, and being holy, he will not deceive. It may be objected, that this assurance, which is said to belong to faith, is not always found in believers, and that they are sometimes disturbed with doubts. The fact cannot be denied; but it is not at variance with the definition formerly given, which merely describes what faith is in itself, and what it ought to be in our experience. We should reflect that, like other graces, it subsists in imperfect beings, and has to contend with difficulties, by which its full exercise is impeded. Consciousness of personal demerit, and of the remains of sin in the heart, the appearances of Providence which seem to be opposed to the declarations and promises of Scripture, the temptations of Satan, and the suspension of Divine influences for the sins into which they have fallen, may involve Christians in mental distress, and lead them to call in question truths to which, in their happier hours, they yielded an unwavering assent. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"\* When these obstacles are removed, and the believer fixes his undivided attention upon the faithfulness of God, he feels the same assurance of the truths of religion, however myterious, and however contrary to the natural suggestions of the mind, which he does of his own existence, or of that of the material world. No conviction could be stronger than that of Abraham, when, without hesitation, he offered up Isaac, upon whose life the promises depended, and yet continued to hope for the blessings exhibited in them; and when he confidently expected a son, although he himself was old, and his wife was barren, and the time of child-bearing was past. This was faith in its highest state. It is proposed for our imitation; and as it is implied, that the same trust in God is attainable by others, so there is no reason to doubt that many have trodden, and are still treading in the steps of that illustrious man, and are glorifying God by an unqualified dependence on his word.

Lastly, Through faith, the truths of religion exert influence upon the mind, as if they were perceived by the senses. It considers them as realities, and is suitably affected by them. It has been said that, if the solemn and awful scenes which revelation describes were actually disclosed to view, the sight would overwhelm us, and all worldly affairs would be suspended as too in-

\* Matt. xvi. 31.



significant to engage our attention. This may be true; and it may have been for this reason the will of God, that, in this sublunary state, we should walk by faith and not by sight. Yet such is the assurance of the existence and magnitude of invisible things which faith produces, that they not only excite powerful emotions in the hearts of believers, and give a new direction to their conduct, but they often make a stronger impression upon them than is made by the things which are visible and present. Hence, they renounce the pleasures of sin for the happiness promised by religion; and abandon the world as their portion, in the expectation of the heavenly inheritance. The sacrifices which a Christian has often made, of his will, his ease, his honour, his wealth, his friends, and even of his life, are proofs of the mighty power of faith. These are the trophies which adorn its triumphs. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."\*

Thus far I have given you an account of faith in general, as it respects the whole revelation contained in the Scriptures, and makes all the doctrines and facts recorded in them bear upon the mind, so as to promote our conformity to the will of God, and our final salvation. Being founded upon his testimony, it respects every thing which he has attested, and improves it for the purpose which it was intended to serve. It is conversant with things past as well as with things to come, with things awful and alarming, as well as with those which are calculated to impart peace and consolation to the soul. By faith, we are assured of the threatenings of the law, as well as of the promises of the Gospel; we are moved with fear, as well as animated with hope. It is of great utility and indispensable necessity to the Christian, in the present life; it excites him to the performance of his duty, and supports him in adversity, and fortifies his mind against temptation. "The people that know their God, are strong, and do exploits."† They resist the assaults of Satan whether violent or insidious, overcome the allurements and terrors of the world, and persevere to the end in a course of holy obedience.

I now proceed to speak of justifying faith, or the faith by which a sinner obtains an interest in Jesus Christ, and the blessings of salvation. Let it be observed, that it is not different in its nature from the faith already described, for it is the same grace which operates in the believer, whatever is the object upon which it is fixed. It is called justifying faith, on account of the design to which it is subservient; and, in this view, its exclusive object is that part of revelation which relates to the Saviour, or the Gospel, strictly so called.

The first remark which I make is, that the object of justifying faith is Jesus Christ, and redemption through his blood. Paul said to the jailor of Philippi, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."‡ The person addressed was a sinner, convinced and alarmed, dreading the vengeance of his Maker, and anxiously inquiring how he might be delivered from it. The words are an answer to his question, and must, therefore, point out the object which alone could dispel his fears, and inspire him with hope. This design can be accomplished only by the revelation of a Saviour, or by the Gospel as distinguished from the Law. The faith of the law an awakened sinner already possesses, for his fears proceed from his belief that it is holy and just, and that its threatenings will be executed upon those who have transgressed it, unless they find out some method of escaping its penalty. Nothing will relieve the mind of a criminal condemned to die, but authentic information that his sovereign is willing to pardon him; and nothing will set free the convinced sinner from the terror which he feels, but the knowledge of the mercy of God, through the mediation of his Son. The object, then, of justifying faith is Christ crucified,—Christ lifted up on the cross, like the brazen serpent in the

\* 1 John v. 4.

† Dan. xi. 32.

‡ Acts xvi. 31.

wilderness,—Christ as having borne our sins in his own body on the tree, his blood shed as a propitiation for sin, and the everlasting righteousness which he brought in as the foundation of hope to those who had no hope in themselves. It is false and foolish to suppose, that men may be saved by faith in God as their Creator, and Preserver, and Lawgiver. If they considered him in no other light, and understood the full import of these characters, they would perceive that he is inaccessible to the guilty, a consuming fire, the avenger of such as do evil. It is in the Gospel only, that a sinner will find those views of his character which will quiet the agitation of his mind, and hold out encouragement to return to him. He will never look to his Maker with comfort and hope, till he behold him in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to men. There is no other refuge from his wrath but the atonement.

Secondly, To the revelation of the Saviour in the Gospel, the awakened sinner, under the influence of the Spirit, yields a cordial assent; and this act of his mind is therefore denominated faith. Faith is the belief of a testimony; and it is called human faith, when its object is the testimony of man: divine faith, when its object is the testimony of God. The cold and listless assent which is every day given to the Gospel, by thousands who take no interest in it, and are in no degree influenced by it in their practice, if it be called faith at all, is evidently inferior to the faith of devils, who “believe and tremble,” while those persons believe and disregard. The awakened sinner is under the conduct of the Spirit, who presents the Gospel to his mind with an evidence which has all the force of demonstration. To this internal revelation, this illumination of the mind by supernatural grace, the Scriptures refer, when they speak of “the opening of the blind eyes,” and of the coming of the Gospel “in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.”\* It is impossible to describe the operations of the mind, so as to render them intelligible to those by whom they have not been experienced; but we can all conceive the difference between the assent that we give to a truth, which we have not properly considered and about which we feel no concern, and our assent to a truth which we understand, and know to be intimately connected with our interests. Such is the difference between the faith of nominal Christians, and the faith by which we are saved. The latter is founded on clear perceptions of the truth, and excellence and infinite importance of the Gospel. An evidence accompanies it, which dispels all doubts, removes all objections, and creates the highest assurance; Christ crucified is seen to be the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. The Gospel appears to be worthy of all acceptance, because it is so admirably adapted to the circumstances of men, and redounds so much to the glory of God. It bears upon it the signature of Heaven. It is the truth, and in the judgment of the enlightened sinner, the only truth which deserves his attention. This is the “excellent knowledge of Christ,” for which he is willing to count all things loss.†

Thirdly, Faith implies the reliance or dependence of the soul upon Jesus Christ for salvation. The sinner not only assents to the testimony of God concerning his Son as true, but regards it as worthy of all acceptance. Some indeed, as I remarked in a former lecture, make faith consist in simple assent, because this is the strict and logical definition of the term, and consequently consider it as an act of the understanding alone. But as the Scriptures make use of new words and phrases to express new ideas, so they employ some old words in a sense peculiar to themselves; and we should proceed with them as we do with any other book, when we endeavour, by comparing one passage with another, to ascertain the meaning of a particular term which occurs in it

\* Acts xxvi. 18. 1 Thess. i. 5.

† Phil. iii. 8.



That, in the phraseology of Scripture, faith is not simply an assent of the understanding, but implies an act of volition accepting the Saviour and confiding in him, is evident from the metaphorical terms by which it is described. It is called a receiving of Christ, a coming to him, a fleeing for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, an eating of his flesh, and a drinking of his blood. These terms import such motion or activity as the soul exerts, when it not only contemplates, but desires and embraces the good which is presented to it. In the Old Testament, faith is called trusting in the Lord. Now we know that to trust in a person, is not merely to believe that he is able and willing to deliver us from danger and distress, and to bestow favours upon us, but to accept his proffered assistance, and to commit our interest to his care and disposal. If we reflect upon the situation of a sinner when he believes, we shall more distinctly perceive what is, and naturally must be, the exercise of his mind. Finding himself condemned by the law of God and his own conscience, and disappointed in his endeavours to relieve himself, by his prayers, and tears, and fasts, and good works, how is he affected when Jesus Christ is revealed as the only Saviour from sin? Is he not like the drowning man, who eagerly grasps the plank thrown out to support him; or like the manslayer, who, seeing the avenger of blood close at his heels, ran for safety into the city of refuge? He does not content himself with saying, 'the blood of Christ is infinitely meritorious, and happy should I be, if I could share in the blessings procured by it.' This, we need not doubt, devils could say; for they are aware of the efficacy of his sacrifice, and would rejoice if it were possible to be delivered by it from torment. He farther says, 'I desire to be sprinkled with his blood, that, like the Israelites in Egypt, I may escape, when the wrath of God shall go forth against his enemies. I place my hope upon the great Atonement, by which the justice of heaven has been appeased; I will draw near to God, pleading the merit of his Son; I will present to him his all-perfect righteousness, of which he has testified his high approbation.' It remains, that faith is an acquiescence in the plan of redemption through the mediation of Christ, a reliance upon him as our Saviour, and consequently, that, if there has not been a concurrence of mind and heart in receiving the testimony of the Gospel, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins.

Lastly, Faith implies the renunciation of our own righteousness as the foundation of our hope. This is an obvious inference from the preceding remarks, without attention to which the nature of faith will not be understood. It is not a partial, but an unreserved reliance upon Christ for salvation. To believe, is not to call upon him to assist us in what we have commenced and carried on to a certain extent, but from a consciousness of our utter inability even to begin, to commit the work of our salvation wholly to him. This is the test of genuine faith. That is the faith of God's elect, which leads away the sinner from himself to the Saviour, fixes his undivided attention upon the cross, and derives his peace and hope solely from the sacrifice which was offered upon it. It is a spurious faith, which, forming a treacherous alliance with good works, attempts to introduce them as a partial cause of our acceptance with God. "To him that worketh," says Paul, "the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."\* These words are worthy of attention. To work and to believe are opposed to each other. He who believes does not work, that is, he does not work that he may live, perform duties with a view to obtain the divine favour, associate his own obedience with that of our Redeemer as the ground of his justification. He simply believes; that is, he receives the testimony of God concerning his Son, and

\* Rom. iv. 4, 5.

expects salvation through him alone. It is on this account that true faith is so rare. Men would not object to the aid of Jesus Christ, so far as their own power is insufficient to save them: but to depend upon him to the exclusion of all their own qualifications and good deeds, to owe every thing to him, and to have nothing left of which they may boast as their own,—all this is so contrary to the natural bias of the heart, so mortifying to pride, so destructive of our schemes for appearing respectable in our own eyes, and maintaining what we falsely call the dignity of human nature, that at first we all revolt from it with secret indignation, and will not submit to the humiliating plan, till we have been prepared by the discipline of the law, and the grace of the Gospel. It is the office of faith to receive Christ, as he is revealed in the Scriptures. He is offered freely, and we must receive him without presenting any price in exchange. He is exhibited as the only Saviour; and to receive him as such, is to trust, neither in the merits of any saint, nor in the intercession of any angel, nor in our own repentance and obedience, but in him whose arm brought us salvation, and who claims the undivided glory of a work, which he accomplished without an associate. To believe, is to submit to the righteousness of God; it is to desist from our vain attempts to establish our own righteousness, and to say, “In the Lord have we righteousness and strength.”\*

What has been said concerning faith in general, and justifying faith in particular, is conformable to the doctrine of our church. “By this faith,” says our Confession, “a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.”†

When the question is proposed, whether assurance is of the essence of faith, it is necessary, before we return an answer, to know what is meant by assurance. If it mean a full persuasion of the truth of the divine testimony, to whatever subject it relates, we answer, that it is essential to faith. Faith is not a doubting, hesitating assent, but “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The Christian is firmly persuaded of every doctrine and fact which God has attested, and of every promise which he has made. He believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners; that his death was an atonement for guilt; that there is redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; that he is freely offered to him and others in the Gospel, and that every man who trusts in him shall be saved. But if assurance mean an explicit assurance of our own salvation, we deny that it is of the essence of faith.

In opposition to Papists, who made faith consist in an assent to the truth of the Scriptures in general, and denied that any man could be certain of his final salvation, the Reformers represented it as a firm persuasion, that Christ died for us in particular, and that our sins are forgiven. The founders of our religious society adopted this notion, and in one of their public deeds,‡ have defined faith to be a persuasion on the part of the sinner, that Christ is his; that what he did and suffered he did and suffered for him, and that he shall have life and salvation by him. It may be questioned whether in avoiding one extreme, they have not run into another; or, at least, have not employed language, which must be explained and qualified, in order to make it accord with the truth. A sinner cannot say, in the first instance, Christ is mine in

\* Is. xlv. 24.

† Confes. ch. xiv. § 2.

‡ Act of Assoc. Pres. 21st Oct. 1742.



possession; because this becomes true, only when he has believed, and cannot belong to the nature of faith, as it is a consequence of it. If the words mean only, that Christ is his in the offer of the Gospel, or is offered to him in particular, we allow it, but have a right to complain, that a fact about which there is no dispute, should be expressed in terms which are apt to suggest a quite different sense. The sinner cannot say, till he have believed, that Christ died for him, unless he died for all men without exception; but, consistently with the doctrine of particular redemption, no man can be assured that he was one of the objects of the sacrifice of the cross, unless he have first obtained an interest in it by faith. Neither can every sinner say, in the first moment of faith, that he shall certainly have eternal salvation. He desires salvation no doubt, and his faith implies an expectation of it; but how many believers have been harassed with doubts at first, and during the whole course of their lives have rarely been able to use the language of confidence! This the advocates of this definition are compelled to admit; and it is curious to observe how, in attempting to reconcile it with their system, they shift and shuffle, and almost retract, and involve themselves in perplexity and contradiction, as those must do who are labouring to prove that, although it is a fact that many believers are not assured of their salvation, yet assurance is of the essence of faith. It is manifest that, if assurance is of the essence of faith, it can never be separated from it.—The exercise of faith is regulated by the word of God, and its object is there defined. But it is nowhere revealed in the Scriptures, that Christ died for any particular person, and that his sins are forgiven. How, then, can an assurance of these things belong to the nature of faith? How can it be our duty to believe what is not in the testimony? It is an objection against this definition, that it makes faith consist rather in the belief of something regarding ourselves, than in the belief of the testimony of God; in the belief of the goodness of our state, rather than of the all-sufficiency and willingness of Christ. It may be farther objected, that it confounds the inferences from faith with faith itself; nothing being plainer than that these propositions, ‘Christ died for me,’ ‘my sins are forgiven,’ are conclusions to which the mind comes, from the previous belief of the doctrines and promises of the Gospel. Farther, it is chargeable with this error, that it defines faith in its highest and most perfect state, and excludes the lower degrees of it, and thus lays a stumbling-block before thousands of the people of God, who, not finding in themselves this assurance, are distressed with the melancholy thought that they are unbelievers. Although adopted by our fathers, it is contrary to the doctrine of our standards, to which only we are bound to conform, and in which it is expressly said, “This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be a partaker of it.”\* In a word, this definition of faith has been rejected by many of the greatest divines. I shall mention only one, the learned and pious Bishop Davenant, who observes, in his work entitled *Determinationes Quæstionem quarundam Theologicarum*, that the word confidence or assurance has two meanings. It signifies the act of resting upon, and adhering to Jesus Christ, by which we embrace him as with both our arms, and seek to obtain pardon, grace, and glory from the Father. Justification follows this act, whether the sinner be fully persuaded of the remission of his sins or not. But sometimes it denotes an effect consequent to justification, namely, the full persuasion and lively sense of pardon, and the favour of God. We confess, he says, that this confidence or assurance is not justifying faith, but its daughter, and that the justified soul is not wont to obtain it, but after many exercises of faith and holiness.

\* Conf. ch. xviii. § 3.

It is admitted, that an assurance of salvation is attainable in the present life. An apostle exhorts Christians "to make their calling and election sure."\* The exhortation implies that they may not be assured of the goodness of their state, for no man would be exhorted to seek what he already possesses, and, consequently, that this persuasion is not found in every believer, as it would be if it belonged to the nature of faith. They are called upon to examine themselves, whether they be in the faith; but this would be unnecessary, if there were an evidence in faith itself which satisfied the mind. The assurance of which we speak, is not obtained by the direct act of faith, but by reflection. It is the result of evidence, collected by observation and inquiry, that the person is possessed of the faith to which salvation is promised. It is "founded," our Church says, "upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God; which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption."† By many theological writers this assurance has been called the reflex act of faith, but with manifest impropriety. It is not an act of faith, but a process of reasoning founded upon faith, and may be reduced to a regular syllogism: Every man who believes in Jesus Christ shall be saved; but I have believed in Christ, as is proved by the operations of divine grace in my heart; therefore I shall be saved. The major of this proposition is a matter of faith, because it is a revealed truth; the minor is a matter of experience; and the conclusion is of a mixed nature, partaking of the character of both. It is more accurate to call it the assurance of sense, because it is founded on our feelings and dispositions. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."‡

It is evident, from the preceding account, that "faith is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God."§ Without particular assistance, we may assent to the Gospel, upon perceiving the evidence of its truth; but, unless our minds be enlightened, and our hearts be renewed by almighty grace, we will not cordially embrace it, and comply with its design, by placing our whole dependance upon Christ and renouncing every other foundation of hope. Faith is an act, not of the carnal, but of the regenerated man. This important truth we should always bear in mind, that we may seek faith from Him who only can bestow it; and, if we have obtained it, may give all the praise and glory to God. It is explicitly laid down by our Lord in the following words: "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."||

\* 2 Pet. i. 10.

† Conf. chap. xviii. § 2.

‡ 1 John iii. 14, 19—21.

§ Eph. ii. 8.

|| John vi. 44.



## LECTURE LXIX.

## ON THE PRIVILEGES OF BELIEVERS:—JUSTIFICATION.

Importance of the Doctrine—Meaning of the term Justification—The Author and Subjects of Justification—Implies that a Sinner is pardoned, and accounted righteous—Ground of Justification, not the Works of the Law.

THE subject which we are now to consider is entitled to the most serious attention, on account of the important place which it holds in the system of religion. To a man who acknowledges himself to be a sinner, no inquiry is so interesting as that which relates to the means of his restoration to the favour of God; and, if he is thoroughly convinced of his guilt and danger, he will find no rest till he has obtained a satisfactory answer to it. Till this point is decided, all other information respecting religion will be unavailing. Demonstrations of the existence of God will only serve to confirm, and more deeply impress upon his mind, the awful truth which he already believes, that there is a righteous Judge, before whom he must appear, and by whose sentence his final doom will be fixed. To explain the moral law to him, and inculcate the obligations to obey it, will be to act the part of a public accuser, when he quotes the statutes of the land in order to show that the charges which he has brought against the criminals at the bar are well founded, and, consequently, that he is worthy of punishment. The stronger the arguments are by which you evince the immortality of the soul, the more clearly do you prove that his punishment will not be temporary, and that there is another state of existence, in which he will be fully recompensed according to his desert. Hence you perceive how defective is not only natural religion, but that spurious Christianity, the publication of which Unitarians affirm to have been the sole design of the mission of our Saviour. There is nothing in a pure morality, and the doctrine of the resurrection and a future state, to relieve the mind of a sinner.

It is the glory of the gospel, that it reveals the method according to which a sinner may obtain peace with his Maker, and may rise to the possession of eternal life. It resolves the important question, how a man may be just with God. But although the information which he gives on this subject is sufficiently clear, it may be misapprehended, through carelessness and prejudice; and, accordingly, we find that there has been, and still is, a diversity of opinion among professed Christians with respect to the ground of acceptance. An error upon this point is fundamental; for, as there is only one way to heaven, if we miss it and take another, it is certain that we shall not arrive at that happy place. If we entertain right views of the doctrine of justification, we cannot go far wrong with respect to any other essential truth of Christianity; but a mistake here will affect the whole system, and give rise to false conceptions of the character of God, of the mediation of Christ, of the law, of the gospel, of grace, and of works. It was justly termed by Luther, *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*, the article of a standing or falling church; because, according to the views which are adopted in any church with respect to the means of regaining the favour of God, true piety and holiness will flourish or decline in it. I may add, that it was eminently through the preaching of the scriptural doctrine of justification, that the reformation from Popery was effected. The light of this truth discovered to men the abominations of Antichrist, and made them renounce the merit of good works, the efficacy of fasts,

and pilgrimages, and penances, the intercession of saints and angels, the sacrifice of the mass, and all the other tenets by which the mediation of Christ had been virtually set aside, and sinners had been led to rest their hope upon a foundation of sand.

It is necessary, in the first place, to ascertain the meaning of the term justification. It is a Latin word, which, however, is not of classical authority, and is found, I believe, only in the works of ecclesiastical writers. If we explain it according to the laws of etymology, it will signify the making of a person just, as sanctification signifies the making of a person holy. Hence some of the ancients were misled with regard to the meaning of the term, and confounded justification with sanctification. The church of Rome has fallen into this same error. The justification of a sinner is declared by the council of Trent to be not only the remission of sin, but also sanctification and the renovation of the inward man, by which a person who was unjust is made just, and instead of an enemy becomes a friend, so that he is an heir according to the hope of eternal life.—The formal cause of it is the righteousness of God, not that by which he is himself righteous, but that by which he makes us righteous; and by which, bestowed upon us as his gift, we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and are not only accounted, but are truly called, and are righteous, receiving each of us righteousness in ourselves according to our measure, which the Spirit distributes to every man as he wills, and according to the peculiar disposition and co-operation of every man." The council then proceeds to enact the following decree:—"If any man shall say that men are justified solely by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, or solely by the remission of sins to the exclusion of grace and charity which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit, and is inherent in them, or even that the grace by which we are justified is only the favour of God, let him be accursed."\* This is called the first justification, and it is said to be by faith, in a sense, however, which does not altogether exclude merit and predisposing qualifications. The second justification is said to be by works, performed by the aid of the grace which was infused in the first.

Justification is a forensic term, which denotes not a change of a person's dispositions, but a change of his state in relation to the law. It does not make him righteous by an infusion of holy habits, but pronounces him righteous on valid grounds. This appears from many passages to be the meaning of the Hebrew word *צדק*, and the Greek word *δικαιοσύνη*. "If there be a controversy among men, and they come into judgment that the judges may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked."† To justify the righteous is not to make him, but to pronounce him, righteous upon proof of his innocence, and of the goodness of his cause. For this alone is the office of a judge. "To justify the wicked," signifies to pronounce him just, or to acquit him in judgment, and is declared to be an "abomination to the Lord,"‡ as it is to condemn the righteous, or pronounce him to be guilty. "He is near that justifieth me; and who is he that will contend with me?"§ These are the words of our Saviour, and refer to the sentence of his Father, by which he was acquitted from every false charge brought against him by his enemies, as well as from the demands of law and justice which he had fully satisfied. The word is evidently used in the same sense when the Psalmist says, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."|| He is speaking to God as his Judge, and he intreats him that he may not be brought to trial; because neither he nor any other person could expect a sentence in his favour.

\* Concil. Trident, Sess. vi. Decret. et Canon, *de justificatione*.

† Deut. xxv. 1.

‡ Prov. xvii. 15.

§ Is. l. 8.

|| Ps. cxliii. 2.



In the New Testament, the word δικαιουν always bears a forensic sense, or a sense closely connected with it, importing not to make, but to pronounce righteous. When wisdom is said to be "justified of her children,"\* the meaning is, that she is approved or vindicated by them, exhibited in her true character, and cleared from the aspersions of her enemies. The man who is desirous to justify himself, is a man who is eager to prove that there is no defect in his obedience. Of this description were the Pharisees, who maintained that men were accepted by God on the ground of their good works, and made a show of righteousness before the world. "Ye are they that justify yourselves before men."† The publican went down to his house "justified,"‡ that is, acquitted and pardoned by God, whose mercy he had humbly implored. "The doers of the law shall be justified,§ that is, they, and they alone, shall be esteemed righteous by the law, or rather by the Lawgiver. The forensic sense of justification is manifest from its being opposed to condemnation. "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" "Judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification."||

It is unnecessary to multiply proofs, as the matter is abundantly plain. Justification is a change, not of our nature, but of our state. Those who are justified are also regenerated; but the two privileges, although inseparable, are perfectly distinct.

The Author of justification is God. "It is God that justifieth." The person to be justified is accountable to him as his Creator and Lawgiver, and by his sentence he must stand or fall. In this transaction he sustains the character of the guardian of the law, who will take care, if I may speak so, that its authority shall not be subverted, and its rights be violated by any sentence which he may pronounce in favour of its subjects; and of the God of grace, who receives into favour those whom he might have justly excluded from his presence. It is said, indeed, in the Book of Daniel, that "they who turn many to righteousness," or literally, who justify many, "shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."¶ But their justification of others is merely ministerial, and must be understood of their agency under God in bringing men to that faith through which they are justified. In the same way we must explain those words of Christ, which seem to put the power of eternal life and death into the hands of his apostles: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."\*\* If there is no reference to the miraculous gift of discerning spirits, by which they could certainly judge of the state of individuals, and pronounce a sentence upon them which would be ratified in heaven, nothing further can be intended than that, as preachers of the word, they were authorised to declare the characters of those who should be justified, and of those who should be condemned, to assure believers of eternal life, and unbelievers of eternal death.

The person who is justified is a sinner. God "justifieth the ungodly."†† He is considered as one who has violated the law, and the design of the sentence is to set him free from the consequences of transgression. If he were not a sinner, he would be under no necessity to make anxious inquiries respecting the means of restoration to the favour of the Lawgiver. He would be already justified, for God always beholds the righteous with a pleasant countenance.

"Those whom God effectually calleth," says our confession of Faith, "he also freely justifieth, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous."‡‡

\* Matt. xi. 19.

† Luke xvi. 15.

‡ Ib. xviii. 14.

§ Rom. ii. 13.

|| Ib. viii. 33, 34. v. 16.

¶ Dan. xii. 3.

\*\* John xx. 23.

†† Rom. iv. 5.

‡‡ Westm. Conf. ch. xi. § 1.

Although justification is represented as a single act, and is commonly spoken of as a single blessing, yet it consists, according to this definition, of more parts than one, to which, when attempting to explain its nature, we must separately direct our attention. The person to be justified is a sinner; and justification is a sentence declaring him to be just in the eye of the law. Two things are necessarily involved in this sentence; first, that he is acquitted from every charge of transgression which is brought against him by the law; and secondly, that he is accounted to have fulfilled, or on some ground treated as if he had fulfilled, its demands.

Justification implies the acquittal of the justified person from the charges of the law. It may here be observed, that the person in whose favour a legal sentence is pronounced, may be viewed as innocent or guilty. If he is innocent, the law acquits him, by declaring the charge to be unfounded, or, in the language of Scripture, by "bringing forth his righteousness as the noon-day." It is impossible that a trial on false grounds can take place at the tribunal of God; but cases of this kind frequently occur in human courts of justice. If he is guilty, as all those are who obtain the blessing of which we are speaking, the law grants him a pardon, or, to express myself more accurately, as pardon is not the act of the law, he is forgiven by the Lawgiver, or the person in whose hands the administration of justice and mercy is lodged.

The pardon of sin consists in the absolution of the sinner from the obligation to punishment under which he was lying. This is the nature of remission, whether it refer to crimes committed against the law of God, or to crimes committed against the laws of men. Obedience is not merely recommended to us in the way of counsel, which leaves a person to act as he may think proper, but is enjoined by authority, and enforced by the most solemn sanctions: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."\* As soon, therefore, as a man transgresses the commandment, he becomes guilty; or, in other words, he is liable to the penalty, and bound to suffer it by the sentence of the Lawgiver. To pardon this man, is to declare, upon grounds which will be afterwards specified, that, although he has violated the law, it shall not have its course upon him; that he shall be exempted from the fatal effects of his transgressions, and be treated as if he were innocent. Remission places him in the same relation to the law as if he had not sinned. He is no more under a sentence of condemnation than Adam was before his fall. As one sin subjects the offender to the penalty, if God should enter into judgment with him, it would be impossible that he could escape, since his sins are numerous as the stars of heaven, or the sand upon the sea-shore. But God will not enter into judgment with him, nor listen to any of the charges which the law or his conscience may advance, because his justice has received full satisfaction for all his acts of disobedience. Hence the Scriptures employ a variety of metaphorical expressions to show that the guilt of pardoned sin is completely cancelled, and that those who are forgiven are secured against every penal evil. God is said to have "blotted out their sins;" "not to remember them;" to have "cast them behind his back;" to have "cast them into the depths of the sea;" "not to impute them;" and they are represented as so hidden, that when they are "sought for, they shall not be found."† It is evident that these things must be understood, not literally, but as alluding to the various ways in which an object may be concealed from the eyes of men, or banished from their minds. They intimate that, although the sins are ever present to the knowledge of God, who, being infinitely holy, must always view them with abhorrence, yet he will deal with believers in the same gracious manner as if he had forgotten

\* Gal. iii. 10. † Is. xlv. 22. xliii. 25. xxxviii. 17. Micah vii. 19. Ps. xxxii. 2. Jer. l. 20.



their offences, and they were actually removed out of his sight. Hence, it has been said that God beholds no sin in believers. The proposition gave rise to controversy, and we cannot wonder that it did so, as it is expressed in a paradoxical form. If it mean that, literally, God sees no sin in them, it would be false, because he knows them to be chargeable with many transgressions; but nothing more is intended than that he sees in them no obligation to punishment, no ground on which he may proceed against them as a judge. This is a Scriptural truth, which ought to have been expressed in plain and simple terms; no good purpose could be gained by throwing it into a form calculated to surprise and perplex. We may say of this and some other paradoxes relative to the same subject, which caused much discussion more than a hundred years ago,—such as, that believers contract no new guilt by new crimes; that God is not offended by their sins; that confession, and repentance, and prayer, are not necessary to pardon; we may say of them that, if not altogether false, they are a pitiful play upon words; and that, while the sentiments which they were meant to convey, so far as agreeable to Scripture, might be defended, the language ought to have been universally condemned. It is a poor employment to turn the doctrines of religion into riddles.

Such, then, is the nature of remission. It delivers the guilty from the curse of the law; it places those who were devoted to destruction in a state of safety; it averts the judgments which were hanging over their heads, and threatened to overwhelm them for ever. They may confidently say, “O Lord, we will praise thee: though thou wast angry with us, yet thine anger is turned away, and thou hast comforted us.”\* Sin, although a deadly poison, cannot now destroy them, because an effectual antidote has been administered. Its influence, indeed, is pernicious, and they should guard against it with the utmost circumspection, because it will pollute their souls, disturb their peace, and displease their heavenly Father; but, although it may subject them to chastisements, it will never expose them to his avenging wrath: “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”†

The pardon which is granted in justification is full, extending to all the transgressions of the guilty persons: “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” By him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.‡ That law appointed sacrifices for many offences, but there were some for which no atonement was provided. The sacrifice of Christ was an atonement for sins of every kind and degree. Hence, in the Gospel a promise of pardon is made to every man who believes, without any exception; and if there is no sin which shall not be forgiven, it is excepted, not because there was not sufficient virtue in the blood of Christ to expiate it, but because it consists in a deliberate and wilful rejection of his sacrifice; so that the unhappy man is in the same condition with the patient under a dangerous disease, who will not take the only medicine which could cure him, and is therefore abandoned by his physician. With respect to past and present sins, there is no doubt that they are immediately remitted, so that the only question relates to those of which the believer may be afterwards guilty. To some it has appeared improper to say, that they also are forgiven as soon as he believes; because there is an absurdity, they think, in supposing a debt to be cancelled before it is contracted. To this objection it may be replied, that there is no more ground for the charge of absurdity in this case than in that of our Saviour, to whom all the sins of his people, past, present, and to come, were at once imputed; for “the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all;”§ and who consequently made satisfaction for millions of sins which had not yet been committed. There is

\* Is. xii. 1.

† Rom. viii. 1.

‡ Matt. xii. 31. Acts xiii. 39.

§ Is. liii. 6.

no difficulty in the pardon, which does not occur in the expiation, of future sins. It should be considered that we are speaking of a Divine transaction; and that, to him whose prerogative it is to justify the ungodly, the future is as the past, as fully known and equally the subject of his purposes and proceedings. When a sinner believes, he obtains an interest in the atonement which was made for all his sins. It is not conceivable, therefore, that only a part of his sins should be pardoned; the blood of Christ, which secures him against condemnation for those which are past and present, must secure him, at the same time, with respect to those which are future. This is all that is meant by the pardon of these sins. He is placed in such a situation, that they shall not be imputed to him. He is delivered from the curse, or the sentence pronounced upon the transgressors of the law; so that, although he may afterwards transgress, the sentence shall not pass upon him. He may daily offend, for there is no man that "liveth and sinneth not;" but whatever his own apprehensions may be, God is at peace with him: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness; their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."\*

Hence it appears, that the pardon granted in justification is irrevocable. The man whom his sovereign has forgiven for one act of rebellion, may revolt from his allegiance a second time, and again fall under his displeasure. But "the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance." We must not imagine that, like an earthly prince, he frequently changes the objects of his love, and that those who are his favourites to-day, may incur his hatred to-morrow. A foundation is laid for the permanent exercise of his mercy and good-will towards believers, in the never-failing efficacy of the atonement of his Son. His blood answers every charge, covers every sin, enforces every plea, and itself pleads with irresistible eloquence in behalf of those for whom it was shed. The sins into which the believer may fall through the treachery of his heart and the influence of temptation, are not a reason why his pardon should be revoked. Conscious of demerit, he may dread the consequence and be alarmed when he thinks of divine justice, which he has offended and cannot appease; but while repentance and humiliation are his duty, his fears of final condemnation are unfounded, because the sin which disquiets him was expiated on the cross, and the justice before which he trembles requires his absolution.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."† Man would have been blessed if he had never sinned, and, continuing to obey his Creator, had enjoyed the happiness which would have flowed from his favour. Since he has fallen, he can now only be blessed when the anger of God is averted from him, and he is treated as if he were innocent.

The forgiveness of sins is not the only blessing which is implied in justification. Although a criminal were fully pardoned, yet, if nothing more were done, he would have no title to the privileges and rewards which were promised to obedient subjects. It is necessary that the sinner should not only be delivered from guilt, but should also be accounted righteous, or treated, on some valid ground, as if he had fulfilled the demands of the law.

Some indeed maintain, that justification consists solely in the remission of sins; but it may be easily shown that this is a mistake. The Scripture describes this privilege as comprehending the imputation of righteousness to us, and as the constituting of us righteous before God, when it speaks of the "blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works."‡ "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."§ The term, to justify,

\* Heb. viii. 12.

† Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

‡ Rom. iv. 6.

§ Rom. v. 19.



implies something more than the pardon of sin, for it signifies to pronounce a person to be just; and the criminal is not just in the eye of the law, merely because he is pardoned. There is, indeed, now no charge which can be alleged against him as the reason why he should be condemned and punished; but there is a great difference between simple innocence and righteousness. Righteousness supposes that the whole law has been fulfilled; innocence imports only that it has not been transgressed. I may remark by the way, that even innocence is not the effect of pardon, because pardon pre-supposes that the law has been violated; and the only effect of it in respect of a believer, is to place him in the same situation with an innocent person in so far that the penalty will not be executed any more upon the one than upon the other. No man can be pronounced just by him who judges according to truth, unless he be possessed of justice or righteousness. In the case of a sinner, therefore, the imputation of righteousness is pre-supposed as the ground of his justification, which, consequently, implies something more than simple remission. Besides, let it be considered that, although the remission of sins is a blessing of incalculable value, it does not fully answer the design of the substitution of Christ in our room, or the expectations and desires of the sinner. The object of his suretyship and sacrifice was, not only to reconcile us to God, but to restore the happiness which we had forfeited by disobedience; and the sinner who believes, aims at the enjoyment of a complete and everlasting salvation. But the whole effect of pardon is to deliver a criminal from punishment; it does not reinstate him in the favour of his prince. Were nothing more, therefore, included in justification than the pardon of sin, this privilege might be enjoyed, while at the same time the person was destitute of a title to heaven. Perhaps the reason that some theological writers are so eager to confine justification to the remission of sins is, that a right to future felicity being still wanting, room may be left for the introduction of works as the procuring cause of it. But Jesus Christ will not share his glory with those whom he saves, nor does he bestow his blessings by halves. Those who are forgiven, are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life, and a righteousness is imparted to them which is the foundation of their claim to it. Were a sinner merely pardoned, he would be acquitted, but not properly justified. The law of God would still have a demand upon him, because, although he did not owe the debt of suffering, he would still owe the debt of obedience. The privilege would be incomplete; his state would be imperfect; and although secured against the danger of being cast into hell, he would be in the utmost uncertainty whether he should ever be admitted to the happiness of heaven.

There are two ways in which a man may become righteous. First, he may become righteous by his personal obedience. "He that doeth righteousness," says John, "is righteous."\* In this way, Adam would have been righteous, if he had faithfully exerted in the service of God the moral power with which he was endowed. In this way, those angels are righteous who kept their first estate when many of their fellows apostatized, and who are now confirmed in holiness beyond the possibility of failure. In this way, some imagine that fallen man may become righteous, because, in their opinion, he has not lost his original ability to obey; or, if it is in some degree impaired, God has lowered his demands to meet our infirmity. Secondly, a man may become righteous by imputation. If he cannot himself fulfil the law, another, taking his place, and coming under his obligations, may fulfil it in his name; and the obedience of this surety may be placed to his account. Jesus Christ, for example, might become the representative of all mankind, or of a portion of

\* John iii. 7.

mankind, and, by obeying the precepts of the law in their stead, might bring an everlasting righteousness, which should be reckoned to them as the ground of their justification.

The justification of a sinner must be founded, either upon his personal righteousness, or upon the righteousness of Christ. The grand question is, to which of these is he indebted for acceptance with God?

The Apostle Paul repeatedly declares, "that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." I have no doubt that his meaning was distinctly apprehended by those whom he addressed; but the spirit of controversy has endeavoured to involve it in obscurity, and even to put a sense upon his words directly contrary to what he certainly intended. It has been asked, of what law does he speak? and what are the works which he excludes from justification? By the law, some understand the ceremonial law: and their design in so limiting it, is to prove that, notwithstanding the express exclusion of works, we may be justified, in part, at least, by our obedience to the moral precepts. But to suppose Paul to have used so many arguments as are brought forward in his epistles, to show that we are not justified by the works of the ceremonial law, is to represent him as having spent much time and labour in vain; for there is no evidence that there were any persons in his days, who imagined that eternal life could be obtained by ceremonial observances alone. It is plain, from several parts of his writings, that, by the law, he meant the ten commandments which were engraven upon two tables of stone; but, in the more extensive acceptance of the term, it signified the law of Moses, comprehending moral as well as ceremonial precepts, and was the name for the whole system of duties which God had enjoined upon his people by the ministry of that illustrious man. Admitting, then, that the apostle refers to the law of Moses, we have an answer ready to the second question, What works are excluded from justification? All works are excluded, without exception; the works of the first and the second table; moral and ceremonial works; every act of man, performed in obedience to a commandment of God. Nothing is more absurd and perverse, than to ask what works are meant to be excluded, when Paul in twenty places has excluded works in general, without once hinting that he intended only those of a particular kind. The subject is perfectly intelligible to those who are willing to understand; and all the difficulties and objections which have been started, arise from aversion to his doctrine.

In proving that a man cannot be justified by the works of the law, we may begin by observing, that the point is determined by this single consideration, that he is a sinner, and that his present conduct, however dutiful, cannot compensate for his past disobedience. He is bound to obey, every moment of his life; and consequently, the obedience which he now performs, being due by a prior obligation, cannot, as if it were a free gift or gratuitous service, cancel the debt which he had formerly contracted. There is not a single sentence of Scripture which authorises us to think, that, if a man who has transgressed shall return to his duty, his past offences will be overlooked. Such an idea is contrary to common sense, and to the express sanction of the law. "The soul that sinneth it shall die."\* Hence we see, that by works alone justification is impossible. The utmost which the opponents of our doctrine can plead for, is, that our justification is in part owing to our works. The fact, that all men are guilty, demonstrates that some expedient must be found to appease our offended Creator, and that we must be indebted to something more efficacious than our repentance and amendment of life for the pardon of our sins. But, passing this difficulty which meets us at the outset, I observe, that the obedience which the law of God demands is so high, that he must be miser-

\* Ezek. xviii. 20.



ably ignorant of the present state of human nature, who imagines that any of the descendants of Adam is able to perform it.

First, The law demands obedience to all its precepts.—“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” It is thus that Paul quotes these words of Moses, “Cursed is he that confirmeth not the words of this law, to do them.”\* The chief difference is, that the word “all” is inserted by the apostle; but the original passage implies universal obedience, as well as the quotation. The law is a declaration of the will of the supreme Lord, and the authority which enacted it, extends alike to all its precepts. Whatever duty is enjoined in the law, there is the same reason for performing it as for performing any other, namely, the command of the lawgiver. If a single duty is omitted the law is not fulfilled; and so high is this matter carried, that the Scripture declares, that “he who offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.”† He virtually subverts all the precepts by the violation of one; for, by disowning the Divine authority in this instance, he in fact disowns it in every instance. All the precepts depend upon the will of the Lawgiver; and, if his will is not a sufficient reason for obedience in one case, it cannot be a sufficient reason in another. Our claim, then, to the favour of God will be invalidated by omission, as well as by positive transgression; and it is preposterous to dream of making one duty a compensation for another. The law admits of no lower terms. We must give all or nothing. We may now ask the man who seeks to be justified by works, whether he thinks himself able to comply with this demand? whether he has always performed his duty in its full extent? whether he has never neglected it, or forgotten it, or omitted it through ignorance; for ignorance, let it be remembered, is not an excuse unless it be invincible. If God has published his law, and we through inattention and carelessness are unacquainted with its contents, our ignorance is voluntary, and we shall in vain hope for impunity. Although a man may have done many things, yet, if he have not done every thing, his plea is lost; for, to justify him in such circumstances would be to declare falsely, that he has fulfilled the whole law, while in truth he had fulfilled only a part of it.

Secondly, The law demands obedience absolutely perfect. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”‡ This is the sum of the law, and the standard of our duty. It requires such love to God as is worthy of him who is infinitely excellent and good; the highest love of which our nature is capable; love not merely sincere, but perfect; love which not only prevails over opposite affections, but extinguishes them, and reigns alone in the heart. It is inconsistent with the perfection of this love, that it should ever lean towards any rival, that it should be suspended for a single moment, that it should abate and languish in its exercise. The law is violated by the slightest remission of its intensity, or by the temporary cessation of its activity in producing the proper fruits and expressions of it. The love to our fellow men which is required, is equally perfect. We must love our neighbour as ourselves; if not with a love exactly of the same degree, yet certainly of equal sincerity; desiring his welfare as we desire our own, and willingly exerting ourselves to promote it. A regard to our own interests is not to be laid aside; but it must be so moderated as not to degenerate into selfishness. Not only hatred and malice are transgressions of the law, but even indifference to our brethren; nay, it is violated not only by indifference, but by a love not sufficiently ardent, and by efforts not sufficiently vigorous for their good. In

\* Gal. iii. 10. Deut. xxvii. 26.

† James ii. 10.

‡ Matt. xxii. 37—39.

short, the law demands not only the form, but the spirit of obedience. It demands, in every act of obedience, the full exertion of all the moral power with which we were originally endowed by our Creator. There must be no languid endeavours, no cold and feeble services. No motives must influence our minds but the right ones; no ultimate end must be proposed but the glory of God. Nothing must be wanting in matter or in manner, in external actions or in internal principles; for a deficiency in the measure or degree of our obedience, would prove fatal to our hopes. Enough, I presume, has been said to show that no man can be justified by the works of the law.

I shall add, however, in the last place, that the law demands an uninterrupted course of obedience to the end of our lives. In the case of Adam, the time of trial was limited and probably would have soon terminated. But in our case, I know of no limitation; there is no period within the bounds of our mortal existence at which we might claim the reward. Every day calls for new labour; every year extends the term of our service, and multiplies the probabilities of a failure; it is only when the shades of evening descend, that man finishes his task and retires to rest. We must not therefore think that we have attained, and are already perfect; but, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before, we must press towards the mark, if we would bear away the prize of immortality. This we must do, notwithstanding our natural disposition to grow weary of every exercise which is long continued, and in the face of many discouragements and temptations, calculated to divert our attention from our duty, to seduce our affections, and to create impatience of restraint. Should these causes overcome our resolution; should we suspend our services for a time ever so short; should we begin to faint, or even admit a wish to be released from our obligations, we should immediately become criminal in the eye of the law, and forfeit all claim to the expected recompence. He who runs a race will not be crowned, although he run well, unless he reach the goal.

The plan of justification by works appears to be absolutely impracticable. The labour is difficult, and man is weak and inconstant. If we take into the account the strength and waywardness of his passions, his liability to error, the obstacles which lie in his way, and the numerous causes by which his attention may be diverted from his duty, disgust and weariness may be created, and opposite considerations may obtain a predominant influence upon his mind, we shall be convinced of the probability, or rather the certainty, that he will fail, not in one instance only, but in a thousand. There is no man that liveth and sinneth not in deed, or word, or thought. Besides the invincible difficulties attendant upon this plan of justification, it is in itself comfortless, and a source of continual anxiety to every person who in earnest attempts it. No such thing is possible as the assurance of hope; his mind is a stranger to the peace and joy which arise from the belief of the record of the Gospel, because a fear must always haunt him, that, after all his pains, he shall in some unpropitious hour lose his labour. "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it."\* The spirit, therefore, by which he is necessarily animated, is a spirit of bondage, which from its nature destroys the value of his obedience by converting it into the task of a slave, who toils under the dread of the lash.

In an inquiry, whether it is possible to be justified by works, it was necessary to ascertain what are the requisitions of the law. The law is the standard of works; and if they are not conformable to it, the hopes founded upon

\* Ezek. xxxiii. 13.



them are vain. The question is not, What measure of obedience we are disposed to yield, or what measure we are capable of yielding? but, What is the obedience which God requires from us? This we learn from his precepts, fairly and honestly interpreted; and so high is the demand, that every man may justly despair of being able to fulfil it.

But will God be satisfied with nothing less than perfect obedience? Yes, some reply; he has had compassion upon his frail and erring creatures, and is willing to receive them into favour upon easier terms. He has given them a milder law, more suitable to their present condition, which, through the assistance of his grace, they are enabled to obey. This notion, which is exceedingly prevalent, and by which the scriptural doctrine of justification is subverted, will be examined in the next lecture.

## LECTURE LXX.

### JUSTIFICATION.

ground of Justification continued; not Repentance and Sincere Obedience—Righteousness of Christ, the sole ground—Observations on the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness to Believers.

In the preceding lecture, I showed you that justification is a legal term, and denotes the sentence pronounced by a judge upon a person who has been brought before him for judgment. If the person is righteous in himself, the sentence merely ascertains and declares in a judicial manner what he is; but in the case of men who are standing before the tribunal of God, a different process is necessary. As they are unquestionably guilty, an act of grace must be passed in their favour, cancelling the obligation to punishment; and, accordingly, the remission of sins is an essential part of our justification. But this is not all. The acquitted criminal is not necessarily restored to the favour of his prince, and entitled to the reward which was promised to an obedient subject. Pardon frees the sinner from the pains of hell, but gives him no right to the happiness of heaven. He must somehow be possessed of a complete righteousness, which shall answer all the demands of the law, that he may be accepted by his Maker, and obtain the eternal inheritance.

It may be proper by the way to remark, that our common language on this subject may give rise to misapprehension. We often speak of the pardon of sin, and the possession of a justifying righteousness, as if they were distinct; and hence it may be supposed, that the one might be enjoyed without the other. This is the inference suggested, when it is sometimes inaccurately stated, that justification consists in the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of righteousness. But the truth is, that the imputation of righteousness is the foundation of pardon, as well as of restoration to the favour of God. The righteousness of Christ, although it is strictly one and cannot be divided, is distinguished, for the sake of explanation, into active and passive; the former denoting his obedience to the precepts, and the latter his endurance of the penalty. There is an imputation of his whole righteousness to the believer, and, in the language of scholastic theology, it is the material cause of our justification. These remarks have led me to anticipate a subsequent department of the doctrine; but I deemed it necessary to make them at this time, to guard against any misapprehension of what I have said, that more than pardon is

necessary to the sinner, and that he must be possessed of a complete righteousness, a righteousness corresponding to the precept, as well as to the penalty, in order to his being accepted by his Maker.

It is therefore an important question, how this righteousness may be obtained; and there are only two ways in which it can be conceived to be acquired; by our personal obedience, or by the imputation of the righteousness of another. I have endeavoured to prove, that the attainment of it in the first way is possible, by showing you that the demands of the law are so extensive that no man living can comply with them. It requires obedience to all its precepts, without a single exception; obedience absolutely perfect, a failure in one act, or in the motive from which it is performed, being sufficient to invalidate the whole; and obedience continued to the end of life, because no prior term is fixed, and it is after death that the final judgment will take place. To every person who considers the extent of these demands, it will appear as impossible for the descendants of Adam, in their present state of weakness and depravity, to fulfil them, as it is to remove mountains by a word, or to ascend to heaven by a wish. The notion of sinless perfection as attainable in this life, which has been broached in modern times, could arise only in minds disordered by enthusiasm, or blinded by profound ignorance of human nature, and the Divine law.

I might therefore proceed to show you that we are justified by the righteousness of another, did not a new obstacle present itself, which it is necessary to remove out of the way. The pride of the human heart, unwilling to forego its claims to the favour of God, has exerted its ingenuity in devising a method of evading the force of the argument founded on the high demands of the law. It is granted, we are told, that we are unable to fulfil them; but it is added, that the original terms upon which eternal life was promised are relaxed. God has been graciously pleased, for the sake of Christ, to make a new covenant with us, in which he promises to pardon our sins upon repentance, and since we cannot perform perfect, to accept of sincere obedience as the ground of our justification. This doctrine is laid down in a variety of terms, and with greater or less degrees of plainness; but I have stated the substance of what is maintained by Divines of a particular class. To give it the more plausibility, it is acknowledged, that still our salvation is of grace, because there is grace displayed in lowering the demands of the law, and grace is communicated to assist us; although it turns out to be such aid as we may use or not as we please, and as will be of little avail without vigorous exertions of our own. It is also acknowledged, that we are under high obligations to our Saviour, in consequence of whose mediation this new law has been given, and what may be wanting in our obedience is supplied by his merit. The scheme, however, is manifestly an attempt to establish our own righteousness, from a reluctance to submit to the righteousness of God. It is a miserable mixture of the law and the gospel, an illicit association of the righteousness of Christ and that of the sinner, an abortive effort to defend the doctrine of justification by works against the solemn denunciations of Scripture. Upon this scheme I make the following remarks.

First, There is not the slightest vestige of it to be found in the Scriptures. I challenge any man to point out a passage in which it is declared, that Christ merited that we might merit; that since we cannot be justified by perfect, we shall be justified by imperfect obedience; or that God has given an easier law, adapted to the present condition of human nature. These are dogmas of very great importance, as they relate to our everlasting concerns, and they would need to be supported by evidence perfectly satisfactory; but when we call for it, we are put off with bold assertions and sophistical arguments. We read of our being constituted righteous, but it is by a righteousness which is not our



own, nor of the law, but the righteousness of another, namely Christ. "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."\* We read of a new covenant which God has made with men, but it is truly a covenant of grace, for it is a covenant of promise. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."† Where do we read of a new covenant of works, in which sincere obedience is the condition, and eternal life is the recompense? It exists only in the writings of some men, who cannot or will not understand the gospel of Christ.

Secondly, The idea of such a new law as has been described, is fraught with absurd and impious consequences. It reflects the greatest dishonour upon the law which was originally given to man. It sets aside its demands, although they were not arbitrary, but were founded on the nature of God and man, and the relations subsisting between them; it pronounces them to be unreasonable in the present circumstances of human nature, and makes the authority of the law give way for the accommodation of the criminal. It is in fact an abrogation of the law, than which a greater dishonour cannot be conceived; for the new law of which we speak is totally different from the original law, no two things being more different than a law which requires perfect, and a law which is fully satisfied with sincere obedience. The supposed change implies a reflection not only upon the law, but upon the Lawgiver. When first delivered to man, the law was a representation of the holiness of his Maker, a glass which brightly reflected the infinite purity of his nature; and his language by it was, "Be thou holy, for I am holy." How can we conceive a change to have taken place in its requisitions, and at the same time believe that its Author continues the same? Must we not conclude, that if he demands less holiness from his creatures he is himself less holy? He can bear now certain imperfections which he formerly condemned; he is pleased if we love him in some degree, although we do not love him with all our strength and soul; he is content if we have some portion of good-will to our neighbour, although we do not love him exactly as ourselves. If we really wish to do our duty, it is enough; we shall obtain his approbation should we fail in the performance, and the intention will be accepted for the deed. That strictness which called for "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over," no longer exists; that opposition to sin which rejected an action upon which the slightest stain was found, has given place to a more accommodating temper. In short, we do not recognise in the Author of this milder law, the Being who published the decalogue from Sinai. Besides, the doctrine which we are considering, gives a false and unfavourable view of the mediation of Christ. "Think not," he said, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."‡ That it was not the ceremonial law which he meant, or the ceremonial law alone, is evident from his subsequent vindication of the moral precepts from the corruptions of tradition. "Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven."§ But notwithstanding this solemn admonition, we must conclude that he did come to destroy the law, if we give credit to those who affirm, that in consequence of his mediation, a lower degree of obedience is accepted. The first law would not be pleased with our obedience unless it were absolutely perfect; the second is satisfied if it is simply sincere. The first therefore has been set aside to make room for the second, as the edict of an absolute prince claiming the whole property of his subjects, would be repealed by the publication of another, in

\* Rom. v. 19.

† Heb. viii. 10—12.

‡ Matt. v. 17.

§ Ib. 19.

which he asserted his right only to the half. Jesus Christ, according to this hypothesis, has made that which was once duty to be no longer duty, and that which was once sin to be no longer sin. What is this in the opinion of every man, who believes that the law of God, being founded in the nature of things, is immutable, but to represent Jesus Christ as the minister of unrighteousness? We may conclude from these reflections, that the doctrine of a new law, which accepts of sincere obedience as the ground of our justification, is a vain and unhallowed attempt to build again what the gospel had destroyed.

In the last place, The sincere obedience of believers is expressly excluded from being the ground of their justification. If all works are rejected, sincere but imperfect works must share the common fate; for we are not at liberty to make a distinction in their favour. When the Apostle Paul rejects the works of the law without limitation, he certainly rejects sincere obedience, which consists in works of the law, or it would not be obedience at all. This argument is decisive till it be proved that there are two laws, the one requiring perfect, and the other imperfect obedience, and that only the works of the former are discarded. But the truth is, that the works, concerning which the Scripture affirms that a man cannot be justified by them, are the very works for which some men so strenuously contend. It is a palpable absurdity to suppose that they are perfect works, for these are the works which were originally required, and they would now undoubtedly be as acceptable to God and beneficial to the performer as ever. Unless we conceive them to be such works as man may be supposed able to perform, all the elaborate reasoning on the subject is a mere waste of time and labour. Now, no man expects to be justified by perfect obedience to the law, for no man in his senses imagines himself to be capable of such obedience. It is what is called sincere obedience, which Paul had in view in the declaration so often repeated, that "by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Such was the obedience in which the Galatians trusted. Imperfectly as they understood the dispensation of grace, they were not so ignorant as to dream that they could fulfil the high demands of the law: and they must have rested their hope upon such works as were understood to be within the compass of their ability, upon their honest and persevering endeavours to do their duty. What were the works which Paul renounced, when, in reference to his present as well as his past attainments, he said, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith?"\* And what were the works to which he referred when he said, "for I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified?"† They were manifestly all his works without exception, and consequently works performed in faith and love, works performed with the assistance of grace; or in other words, that sincere obedience which some men would obtrude upon us as our justifying righteousness, but in which he was so far from confiding, that he utterly disclaimed it, and earnestly desired to be found in the righteousness of Christ.

We see, then, that the notion of a new law, which requires only sincere obedience as the ground of our acceptance with God, is utterly untenable. It would have been long since exploded, if the Scriptures had been understood, and admitted as the supreme judge of religious controversies; and its prevalence is owing to the ignorance of those who teach, and those who receive it,

\* Philip. iii. 8, 9.

† 1 Cor. iv. 4.



and to the strong disposition, which only almighty grace can subdue, to arrogate to ourselves the glory of our salvation.

I shall subjoin two or three general remarks in corroboration of the preceding reasoning, before I leave this part of the subject.

First, If men are justified by works, no adequate reason can be assigned for the mission of Christ. It is acknowledged that we are indebted to him for paving the way for our acceptance with our Maker, and facilitating the attainment of his favour; but surely some less costly expedient might have been devised to give efficacy to our repentance and our duties, if this was all that was wanted. If man could have fulfilled the demands of the law, Christ would not have been sent to yield obedience to its precepts; and to suppose it to have been his design to lower its terms, and to render a less degree of holiness sufficient, as the condition of future happiness, is to represent the effect of his mission to have been the virtual subversion of the moral government of God. Was this the purpose for which he descended to the earth? The doctrine which lessens the necessity of the mediation of Christ, or would lead us to consider it as only supplementary to human exertions, is manifestly contrary to the Scriptures, in which his mediation is represented as the foundation that supports the whole superstructure of the religion of sinners. This argument is employed by Paul—"If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."\*

In the second place, The doctrine of justification by works, in any form, obscures the glory of the grace of God. This argument also is used by the Apostle—"If it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work."† It is strange that some men should labour, with so much ingenuity and perseverance, to reconcile two things which are declared to be irreconcilable, and destructive of each other. The glory of grace consists in giving freely, or, as it is expressed in the prophet—"without money and without price;" what is obtained by works, is granted in consideration of previous service, and is the payment of a debt. According to the doctrine of justification by the old or the new law, the question which Paul presumed would put all men to silence, may be answered by thousands: "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?"‡ "I have given to God," every justified person might say, "and I am entitled to the reward which I enjoy." Few, perhaps, would venture to express themselves in a manner so ill befitting creatures and sinners; but this is the language of the system. How contrary are the sentiments and feelings of which it is a faithful interpreter to the design of God in our redemption, "that he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus!"§

In the last place, Justification by works lays the foundation of boasting. "If Abraham," says Paul, "were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory;" and although he adds, "but not before God,"|| yet the human heart does not stop at this limit, but proceeds to glory even in his presence. We have an example in the self-righteous Pharisee, who, standing by himself, had the presumption to say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men;" and followed this boast with a catalogue of his good deeds. He who had been justified by works, might say, 'My own arm has achieved my salvation.' He might, indeed, with the Pharisee, thank God, acknowledging in words that he was indebted to his assistance for his virtuous actions; but we know that, when man attempts to divide the honour with his Maker, he always takes the larger share to himself. To suppose that, in delivering us from the misery in which pride had involved us, God would adopt a method calculated to foster

\* Gal. ii. 21.

† Rom. xi. 6.

‡ Ib. 35.

§ Eph. ii. 7

|| Rom. iv. 2.

that odious principle, is to represent him as having acted with less caution than one would ascribe to a man of ordinary prudence. The design of redemption is to stain the pride of human glory, to bring man to the throne of grace as a humble supplicant, to make him feel and acknowledge that he owes every thing to unmerited goodness. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith."\* As it is evident from these words, that the law of works encourages boasting, it follows, that we are not justified by that law in any form, and that the ground of our justification is neither our perfect nor our imperfect obedience.

Having proved that our own works have no place in our justification before God, we have prepared the way for showing that we owe this important privilege to the righteousness of Christ. This is the doctrine of our church; and that it is agreeable to Scripture, we can demonstrate by a multiplicity of proofs. In the Old Testament, the name under which the Messiah was foretold is, "the Lord our Righteousness." It was predicted by Daniel, that he was "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." And in another prophet, we find these words, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." Once more, Isaiah says, "By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities;"† plainly intimating that, in consequence of his atonement for their sins, they should be pardoned and restored to the Divine favour, through faith founded on the revelation of him in the Gospel. In the New Testament, the doctrine is delivered with still greater clearness. It is there declared, that "he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" that "he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" that, in the Gospel, "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith;" that, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness;" that, "by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;" that, "by the righteousness of one, the free gift comes upon all men unto justification of life;" that "we are forgiven for his sake;" and that "we are accepted in the Beloved."‡ The same doctrine is taught by Paul, in the words formerly quoted, when he expresses his earnest desire "to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which was of the law; but that which is by the faith of Christ;" and in all the passages which affirm that "we are not justified by works, but by faith;" for the object of that faith is Christ, as having obeyed and suffered in our room.

What the righteousness of Christ is, I explained in my lectures on the Covenant of Grace, § of which it was shown to be the condition. Our own righteousness signifies our conformity to the law of God, and the word has the same meaning when used in reference to him. He was made under the law which we had violated, and by which we were condemned, that as our Surety he might fulfil its demands. From us it required perfect obedience to its precepts, for this was its enactment, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;"|| and such obedience he yielded from the commencement to the close of his life. No man could convict him of sin, and the all-seeing eye of his Father beheld him with unqualified approbation: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Although he owed obedience to the moral law for himself as a man, because his human nature, being a creature, was ne-

\* Rom. iii. 27. † Jer. xxiii. 6. Dan. ix. 24. Isa. xlv. 24, 25. Isa. liii. 11.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 21. Rom. x. 4. i. 17. iv. 5. v. 18, 19. Eph. iv. 32. i. 6.

§ Vol. I. Lecture 49. || Matt. xix. 17.



cessarily subject to the authority of God, yet he did not owe obedience to it in the form of a covenant prescribing it as the condition of life, and in the circumstances of humiliation and affliction in which it was performed. Besides, we might say, that on the same ground on which the obedience of Adam, although he owed it for himself, would have been available to procure eternal happiness to his posterity, the obedience of Christ was available to obtain a right to the promised reward to all whom he represented. We must, indeed, ascribe a far greater value to it than to the obedience of Adam, when we recollect that the merit of an action increases in proportion to the dignity of the person who performs it, and that he who obeyed in our room was not only a holy man, but the Son of the living God.

But the consideration which more satisfactorily shows how the obedience of Christ could be imputed to men, is this, that it was strictly gratuitous. Having become a creature, he was necessarily subject to the law, which binds all the inhabitants of heaven and earth; but then it should be remembered that his becoming a creature was a matter of choice. We come into being and are placed under the law without our consent; but Jesus Christ existed before his incarnation, and assumed our nature by his own spontaneous act. "Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will."\* Such language no other person could have used, because it implies a liberty to act or not to act, which no mere man possesses. He placed himself under the law; but although the law had henceforth a right to demand his obedience, yet its claim was founded solely on his own voluntary deed. If he had not consented, it could not have reckoned him among its subjects. He was made under the law by being made of a woman; but we know, that while we are passively partakers of flesh and blood, he actively took part of the same. His obedience was, therefore, a free-will offering. It was an offering which he might have withheld, by declining to come into those circumstances in which only obedience could be expected from him. As he did not owe it by any prior obligation, you perceive that it possessed positive merit, and that, as it was not at all necessary for himself, it could be imputed to others, or so reckoned to them, that they should be rewarded for it. But the law required something more than obedience from him. Those for whom he acted were sinners, and it was necessary that he should expiate their guilt by enduring the penalty, because, till this were done, the demands of the law would not be satisfied, and consequently its righteousness would not be fulfilled. He therefore submitted to be born in a humble condition, to lead a life of poverty and sorrow, and to close his course by a painful, ignominious, and accursed death. As death was the penalty demanded by the law, our redemption is ascribed to his sufferings on the cross. "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree."† "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."‡ Thus the law obtained from him all that it demanded from us. Its precepts were obeyed, and its penalty was executed. The obedience and sufferings of Christ constitute its righteousness. By both he satisfied the claims of the law, and there remained nothing to be exacted from him, or from those to whom he stood in the relation of a Surety.

As our Lord fulfilled this righteousness not for himself but for sinners, we perceive upon what ground it is imputed or reckoned to them, so that they are justified on account of it. The reckoning of it to them is the application of it to its proper purpose, the accomplishment of the design which he had in view in obeying and suffering. It is not in every case warrantable to illustrate the Divine procedure by human transactions: "God's ways are often not as our ways, neither are his thoughts as our thoughts." Yet, when we are thinking of his moral attributes, we must conceive of them as analogous to the cor-

\* Ps. xl. 7, 8.

† 1 Pet. ii. 24.

‡ Rev. v. 9.

responding qualities in ourselves, free, however, from the limitations and imperfections with which all our virtues are attended. Justice in him must resemble justice in us, although its proceedings may sometimes be above our comprehension, as it is exercised under the direction of an infinite understanding. Now, it is acknowledged to be consistent with justice, that one man should, in certain circumstances, sustain the person of another, act in his name, and procure benefits to him by his services. We cannot, therefore, charge God with injustice for doing what is frequently done by ourselves, is sanctioned by our laws, and is admitted by all men to be perfectly fair and right. Nothing is more common than suretyship; and the actions of the surety are rendered to the person for whom he is bound, as if they had been performed by the person himself. If, then, one man may pay a debt for another, and be punished for another, as happens in the forfeiture of bail or security for the appearance of a person in a civil or criminal process, and may perform a service of which another is to reap the advantage, on what ground can an objection be raised against the interposition of our Saviour to satisfy the demands of the law, which we were unable to answer? If the Supreme Lawgiver, who alone knows what is fit to be done, what is suitable to his character and the relation in which he stands to his creatures, what will most effectually secure the honour and authority of his government; if he shall be pleased to accept the obedience and death of his own Son, invested with the character of our surety, instead of our obedience and death, who will presume to arraign this dispensation? And how does substitution, with which no person finds fault in human affairs, become unjust as soon as it is adopted in the Divine administration? It is acknowledged that the sin of Adam is imputed to us; for, whatever wrangling there may be with respect to the extent in which we are affected by it, there are stubborn facts, besides the testimony of Scripture, which will not permit us to deny that it has had some influence upon us, as our moral and physical weakness, our diseases and mortality. And who will have the audacity to say that this imputation is unjust? It is surely, then, equally agreeable to justice, that the righteousness of Christ should be imputed to us for our deliverance from the guilt, and all the fatal consequences of the sin, of the first man; that, as death came by the one, so life should come by the other.

The imputation of righteousness to a sinner, is the act of God as a judge: "It is God that justifieth." "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works."\* The sinner who appears before his tribunal might be condemned, since he is destitute of the righteousness which the law requires; but by an act of grace, God gives him this righteousness which answers its demands, and on this ground pronounces him to be just. It was by his appointment that the surety fulfilled this righteousness for him; and it is by his judicial act that it is so reckoned to him, that he enjoys the full pardon of his sins, and a right to eternal life.

The imputation of the righteousness of Christ is founded in union to him. It is the consequence of the legal relation which was established between him and his people in the covenant of grace, by which he was constituted their surety, and his acts in this character were made referrible to them. His righteousness thus became imputable to them; and it is actually imputed when a real union is formed between them by the Spirit, and by faith. They thus acquire an interest in every thing which belongs to him as their surety, as a woman acquires a right to the privileges and property of her husband by marriage. It is with a view to this union, which was formerly explained, that we are said to be blessed in him with all spiritual blessings.†

The Hebrew word חֶסֶד and the Greek word *λογίζμαι* sometimes signify

\* Rom. viii. 33. iv. 6, 8.

† Eph. i. 3.



the reckoning to a person of what really is his own. Thus, Shimei prayed that David would not "impute iniquity" to him; that is,\* would not lay the sin which he had committed to his charge, and punish him for it. In like manner, it is said concerning a summary act of justice, which Phinehas had performed, that "it was counted unto him for righteousness."† The meaning plainly is, that it was esteemed a righteous act, for which he was commended and rewarded with "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood." But the word also signifies to reckon something to a person which he has not done, as if he had done it. Thus, Paul says to Philemon concerning Onesimus, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought,"—*τις τοι ἐμὲ ἔλλογῃ*—"put that on mine account;"‡ impute it to me; hold me responsible for it, as if it were my own deed. It is in this sense that the word is used in reference to the justification of a sinner.

It is certain, from the passages formerly quoted, that the righteousness of Christ is placed to the account of the believing sinner, so that he is pardoned and accepted. Now, it is evident, that it is only by imputation that his righteousness can become ours. No such thing is possible, as the transference of moral qualities from one person to another, or the communication of holiness from one who is pure to one who is impure. We cannot be made honest by the honesty of another, or benevolent by the benevolence of another, or patient by the patience of another. These are personal qualities; and unless they be formed in our own minds, unless they have their root and growth there, we must remain dishonest, selfish, and fretful. The virtues which an individual possesses can have no influence upon those around him except by the force of example. But we may be freed from a debt by the payment of a surety, and entitled to a reward for the meritorious services which a friend has performed for us; and when a discharge is granted in the one case, and a recompense is bestowed in the other, it may be said that the deed of the surety, or of the friend, is imputed to us. The acts are theirs; but as they were performed on our account, we enjoy the benefits of them.

From these remarks, you will perceive how Jesus Christ is "made of God unto us righteousness."§ It is not by the transfusion of his holiness into our souls, for we have already shown that justification does not change our nature, but our state; but by such an assignation of his merit to us as avails to procure the pardon of our sins, and our restoration to the favour of God. In speaking upon this subject, it is common to say that his righteousness is reckoned to us as if it were our own; that it as truly accounted ours as if we ourselves had performed it; that we are as righteous as if we had fulfilled the whole law. These are popular expressions, which require to be properly explained, or there is a danger that we shall be led into error. They are apt to suggest the idea of an actual transference of the righteousness of Christ to believers, in consequence of which it becomes literally theirs, as the garment of one man becomes, by his gift, the property of another. They may suggest the idea that his righteousness passes from himself to the sinner; and hence the inference seems to be, that he has parted with it, as a man does not retain what he has given away. But a little attention will convince us that this is not an accurate notion of imputation; and the reflection, that we are speaking of a spiritual transaction, will be a preservative from gross and material conceptions. The righteousness of Christ must ever be inherent in himself, and it can be imparted to others only in a legal sense. Imputation is the act of God, whose judgment is according to truth; and who cannot, therefore, account those to be personally righteous whom he knows to be personally guilty. But he may treat them as if they were righteous, in consideration of the righteousness of

\* 2 Sam. xix. 19.

† Ps. cvi. 31.

‡ Philem. 18.

§ 1 Cor. i. 30.

another. He may pardon their sins, and receive them into favour, and give them a title to eternal life; and in these things justification consists. This is all that can be distinctly understood to be implied in imputation; if you patiently and attentively meditate on the subject, you will find that this is the only sense in which the righteousness of the Redeemer becomes ours. It is ours, because, on account of it, God deals with us as if we were righteous in ourselves; but he cannot look upon us as really righteous, because the contrary is true, any more than we can look on a person as really meritorious, who is rewarded for the merit of another. When a surety pays a debt, the debtor is discharged, but he is not rendered personally solvent. The sole effect of the deed of his surety is to place him in the same situation, in respect of his creditor, in which he would have stood if he had been able with his own property to fulfil his obligations. Considered in himself, and in the eyes of all around him, he is a bankrupt. To be really righteous, and to be righteous by imputation, or, in the language of our church, to be accepted as righteous, are, I presume, two things exceedingly different. Jesus Christ himself is truly, and in the strictest sense, righteous; but those who believe in him are only accounted righteous.

I believe, indeed, that this distinction has not been always attended to; and that, by many, something more is understood to be implied in imputation, although they are unable to give a satisfactory explanation of their meaning. An idea seems to be entertained, that the righteousness of Christ is so attached to the persons of believers, that it is as truly their own property as is a man's personal righteousness. Justification is a legal act, and must be conceived as analogous to other legal acts of a similar nature. But there is no imputation in law of the deed of one man to another, except in the sense already explained. Having been performed for him, it is so accounted to him, that he enjoys all the advantages which would have accrued to him if it had been performed by himself. The law never supposes that he actually performed it, but accepts the performance by another, as equivalent to his own. Now, apply these things to the subject before us, and you will perceive that the imputation of the righteousness of Christ does not consist in accounting us in any sense righteous in ourselves, but in treating us, for his sake, as if we were righteous. What he did and suffered, he did and suffered for his people; and when they claim an interest by faith in his vicarious acts, they are dealt with, from respect to those acts, as if they had themselves obeyed the precepts and satisfied the penalty. In this sense they are righteous, that their surety has fulfilled all the demands of the law, and left nothing to be demanded from them. It has received from him every thing which it might have exacted from them.

I have endeavoured to prove, that the meritorious cause of our justification before God is not our own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ. Works are excluded in every form. No qualification is sought for or regarded in the sinner; God looks upon him as utterly unworthy in himself, and shows favour to him solely for the sake of Christ, in whom he believes. Thus his design is accomplished, that "no flesh should glory in his presence."\* There is not left to the justified person the shadow of a ground on which he might claim any honour to himself, or pretence that he had acted a subordinate part in his salvation, as we shall see more fully in the next lecture, when we consider faith as the appointed means of obtaining this privilege.

The scripture declares, that we are "justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ."† It would be granted, it might be said, that we are justified by grace, if God pardoned our sins upon our repentance without an atonement, and accepted our imperfect instead of perfect obedience.

\* 1 Cor. i. 29.

† Rom. iii. 24.



But how does grace appear according to the doctrine which has now been delivered? The blessing is strictly due to us; the full price has been paid for it; and, properly, justification should be considered as an act of justice. But to this objection the answer is easy. In one view, God is just when he justifies the ungodly man who believes in Jesus; for every demand upon him has been satisfied, and, consequently, the privilege could no more be withheld from him, than a discharge can be withheld from a debtor after his surety has made full payment of his debt. But, let it be remembered, that those who are justified possess in themselves no claim to the blessing. They have made no atonement for their sins, and performed no obedience to entitle them to the reward. They did not even provide a surety to do for them what they could not do for themselves; but God called him to the office. In every view, they are utterly unworthy of his favour; and hence, although their justification may be an act of justice in respect of the Saviour, it is an act of pure grace in respect of them. They are merely recipients of a privilege, which was obtained for them without their concurrence, and for which they give nothing in exchange. They are freely forgiven and accepted, and are thus laid under eternal obligations. Of this they are deeply sensible; and, accordingly, say with the Psalmist, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."\*

A question has been proposed, which is of no practical use, and has been dictated by idle speculation and vain curiosity, Whether the whole righteousness of Christ is imputed to every believer, or only so much of it as will answer all the demands of the law upon him? If we must answer this question, we may do so by asking another: Whether, when a surety pays the debt of twenty persons at the same time, the whole sum is reckoned to each individual, or only that part of it which corresponds to the sum which he owed to his creditor? It is possible that this question might be perplexed with a variety of refinements and subtle distinctions; but it would not be worth while to bestow a moment's attention upon them. It is of no consequence what sentiments men adopt upon a point of this nature. It is not in such niceties that true wisdom consists. The inquiry will appear exceedingly uninteresting to a sinner who is anxious to learn how he may obtain peace with his offended Creator; and he will be content to know in general, that, if he believe in Jesus Christ, he shall enjoy the full benefit of his mediation.

I conclude with two quotations from the fathers. The first is taken from the writings of Justin Martyr; and in the following words, from his epistle to Diognetus, the doctrine of justification through the righteousness of Christ is concisely and perspicuously delivered: "God gave his own Son a ransom for us, the holy one for the transgressors, the innocent for the wicked, the righteous for the unrighteous, the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal. For what else could cover our sins but his righteousness? In whom could we transgressors and ungodly be justified, but only in the Son of God? O sweet exchange! O unsearchable contrivance! that the transgressions of many should be hidden in one righteous person, and the righteousness of one should justify many transgressors!"

I shall add a quotation from Chrysostom on the fifth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "What mind can represent these things? He made the righteous one a sinner, that he might make the sinners righteous. Rather this is not what he says, but something much greater. He does not say he made him a sinner, but sin; not only him who had not sinned, but who did not know sin, that we might

\* Ps. cxv. 1.

be made, not righteous, but righteousness, and the righteousness of God. For this is the righteousness of God, when we are justified not by works, for in this case it is necessary that there should be no spot in them, but by grace, in the blotting out of all sin. This does not permit us to be lifted up, because God freely gives us all, and teaches us the greatness of the gift; for the former righteousness is that of the law and of works, but this is the righteousness of God." From these passages it appears, that, although the fathers do not always express themselves with the same accuracy as modern theologians, whom controversial discussion has led to a more careful selection of language, yet the scriptural doctrine of justification was understood and taught, long before the days of Luther and Calvin.

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## LECTURE LXXI.

### JUSTIFICATION.

Office of Faith in Justification—Whether it precedes or follows Justification—Definition of it—Faith not the Ground or Condition of Justification, but the Instrument of Partaking of it—The Relation of Repentance and Good Works to Justification.

ALTHOUGH Jesus Christ fulfilled the righteousness of the law during his abode upon earth, yet those for whom he acted as a surety, are not immediately delivered from the guilt of their sins, and restored to the favour of God. They are born children of wrath as well as others, and they sometimes continue for many years in a state of condemnation. The righteousness of the Redeemer is not of avail to them till it is applied. I proceed to speak of its application, and remark that, while it is revealed and brought near to us in the Gospel, faith is the means by which it is received, or by which we obtain such an interest in it as to be accepted in the sight of God. God "justifieth the ungodly that believeth in Jesus."

But before I consider the office of faith in justification, it is necessary to attend to the question, whether we are justified before faith or after it; or, "whether the act of God imputing the righteousness of Christ to us, or our receiving it by faith, be first in the order of nature." The question will probably astonish you; but it has actually engaged the attention of some theologians, and given rise to much discussion and metaphysical argumentation. Those who aim at being exceedingly accurate and consummately orthodox, maintain, "that justification, as it is the act of God, is, in the order of nature, antecedent to our faith; and, that our faith is antecedent to it, as it is passively received into, and terminated on, our conscience." The last words I do not well understand; but, if they have any meaning it must be, that the assurance of our justification, and the peace of conscience which flows from it, are posterior to faith. But surely, if men would allow themselves to think, they would see that this assurance is not justification, but a fruit or consequence of it. It follows from this theory, that what has been always understood by justification is not that which is spoken of in the Scriptures when we are said to be justified by faith, but a certain state of mind closely connected with it. It is not the sentence of God pronounced upon the sinner, but his knowledge and experience of the sentence. It would seem, then, that we have been all along in an error; and that, while we supposed that we became righteous by faith, and gave credit to the Scriptures, which told us that righteousness would



be imputed to us if we believed, the matter is transacted in a different manner. We become righteous without faith; righteousness is imputed to us before we believe.

The principal argument by which this opinion is supported, is, that faith is a fruit of the Spirit, and that the Spirit cannot be given to men while they are under the curse of the law, which is not repealed till they are actually justified. The curse is an impenetrable barrier in the way of all gracious communications. But although this seems to be logical reasoning, there are two reasons why I deem it inconclusive. The first is, that, notwithstanding their subjection to the curse, God did love men, and bestow upon them the unspeakable gift of his Son. I should wish to know what there is peculiar in the gift of the Spirit, which should hinder God from giving him, till the curse is removed; or how it comes to pass that, while men were under the guilt of sin, God might send his Son to die for them, but cannot send his Spirit to infuse life into their souls. The second reason is, that no reasoning, however plausible, can support any theory in opposition to Scripture. If the Scripture declares, that we are "justified by faith;" that righteousness is imputed to those who believe; and calls the righteousness of Christ, "the righteousness which is by faith," plainly signifying that faith is antecedent; what right has any man to come forward and tell me, that I should beware of being misled by this language, for that this is not the true order of things? God stands in no need of the counsels of men to direct him how to proceed. He knows what he may do consistently with his own character, and the moral constitution of the universe. If he has said, that he justifies a sinner by faith, what signify all the minute reasonings of puny mortals, which go to prove that this is impossible, because there is a sentence against the sinner which must be reversed before the Spirit is given? Did not God know of this difficulty? or, knowing it, did he express himself as if it did not exist? It were well if, in such matters, the interpreters of Scripture would lay aside their logic, and exercise a humble faith, assenting to what is revealed without obtruding their corrections and twisting every thing into an agreement with their systems. And let us all learn to derive our sentiments in religion, not from the subtleties of scholastic divines and their imitators in modern times, but from the writings of the prophets and apostles, whose language, if it should appear to some men not properly guarded, is, however, such as they were directed to use by the Spirit of inspiration.

The opinion which I have endeavoured to expose, is hyperorthodoxy. As it is contrary to the uniform language of the Scriptures, so it is at variance with the doctrine of our church, which teaches us, that the righteousness of Christ is received by faith; that "faith is the instrument of justification;"\* and that, although "God did, from all eternity, decree to justify the elect; and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification; nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth in due time actually apply Christ unto them."†

Of the faith by which we are justified, such a definition has been sometimes given as entirely overthrows the doctrine which we have laboured to establish. It is represented not only as a living faith which works by love, but as formally comprehending good works. It justifies us not as faith, or a reliance upon Christ, but as operative in the performance of our duty, and is another name for believing obedience. As this definition is inconsistent with the known and established use of the term, so it confounds faith and works, which the Scriptures most carefully distinguish and oppose to each other in justification, and it renders some of their declarations on the subject unmeaning and absurd. If

\* Conf. Ch. xi. §. 1, 2.

† Ib. §. 4.

faith signifies believing obedience, they are convertible terms, and the one may therefore be substituted for the other. Let us then make the exchange in the following passage from the Epistle of James, and observe what is the result: "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."\* Observe how the sentence runs. 'Show me thy obedience without thy obedience, and I will show thee my obedience by my obedience.' A most wonderful species of demonstration, surely! and worthy to be proposed with great solemnity by an inspired apostle! In other passages, the substitution of obedience for faith, would produce an equally ridiculous effect.

Justifying faith has been defined to be a persuasion that Christ died for us in particular, and that our sins are forgiven. I have already shown that this view of it is a mistake. Nothing is the object of faith but what is revealed. But there is no revelation in the Scriptures that Christ died for any man in particular, and that his sins are forgiven; and, therefore, to believe these propositions in the first instance, would be downright presumption. Besides, if this were a just definition of faith, if this persuasion entered into its essence, every man would be an unbeliever who never possessed this persuasion, and the moment he lost it would fall from faith. How many of the people of God would be thus excluded from his favour! how few would be in a state of grace! It is not a fair way to evade this difficulty, to say, that faith, like all the other graces, is imperfect, and that the exercise of it may be suspended. However imperfect any thing may be, its essence always remains; and to talk of suspending what is essential to it, is in fact to say that it is annihilated.

I have shown you, in a former lecture,† that justifying faith is not only an assent to the testimony of God concerning his Son, but the reliance of the soul upon his atonement and righteousness as the only ground of acceptance with God. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness."‡ I shall not resume the illustration of this point, but shall proceed to state what is the office of faith in the justification of a sinner. Now, faith may be considered as itself our justifying righteousness; or as the condition of our justification; or as the means, and, as it has been often called, the instrument, by which we become partakers of this blessing.

To suppose that faith itself is our justifying righteousness, would be to contradict the language of Scripture, in which we are said to be justified by, or through, faith; an expression which merely imports, that it is somehow connected with the enjoyment of the privilege. None, indeed, will maintain that faith is our justifying righteousness, but those who, contrary to the obvious meaning of the word and its constant distinction from works, have first assumed that is comprehensive of obedience. It may seem to favour this opinion, that it is said of Abraham, that he "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."§ The expression is remarkable, and is not without difficulty. The meaning of it, we are confidently told, is, that his faith was accepted as his justifying righteousness; that, "by mere favour, God valued it as equal to a complete performance of his duties, and rewarded him as if he had been a righteous person."|| It would be well if those who use this language, would tell us plainly what they mean by faith; whether it is a simple reliance upon the merit of Christ to the exclusion of works, or such a belief in him as is accompanied with works and derives its efficacy from them. If they speak of faith in the latter sense, as their sentiments on other occasions would lead us to think, their doctrine is refuted by the arguments by which it was formerly proved, that we are not justified by sincere obedience to a new law of grace which God is supposed to have given to us. But if they refer

\* James ii. 18.

§ Rom. iv. 3.

† Lect. lviii.

|| Dr. M<sup>c</sup>Knight, Note 2. *in loco*.

‡ Rom. x. 10.



to faith alone, and, at the same time, deny that the righteousness of Christ is imputed, they must maintain that this single act is accepted instead of obedience in general, and on the ground of it a sinner is pronounced to be righteous. Is it possible that any man really believes that faith, thus disjointed from all works, is equivalent, in the Divine estimation, to the whole obedience which we originally owed? Whatever some may believe, it is certain that this faith is the act of the sinner. It is his obedience to a law requiring faith, and is therefore a work as much as any other duty. How, then, are we to understand the words of the Apostle, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."\* He evidently speaks of faith and works as directly opposed to each other in our justification. According to this opinion, however, they are not opposed, but while all other works are excluded, one work, namely faith, is retained; so that Paul should have said, "To him who omits all works but one, that work is counted for righteousness." But he has said no such thing, and we are certain never intended to say it; for his design was to prove, that all works are excluded, without a single exception, and that we are justified by faith, not as constituting our righteousness, but as receiving the righteousness of Christ. No unprejudiced man who had read his writings, ever doubted that this was his design. When we reflect, that he expressly declares that Christ is made righteousness to us, that we are made righteous by his obedience, and that righteousness is imputed to us without works, we cannot suppose for a moment that the true meaning of the passage before us is, that faith itself is our justifying righteousness. Fair criticism requires, that a singular expression should be explained in consistency with the general sentiments of the book in which it occurs. By this rule, we must understand the words, "faith is imputed for righteousness," in consistency with Paul's uniform doctrine, that a sinner is just before God only in the righteousness of Christ, and must admit that here he uses a metonymy by which the efficient is put for the effect, or the instrument for the end accomplished by it. Abraham's faith was imputed for righteousness; that is, he obtained by it a righteousness, on the ground of which God justifies the ungodly. We are sure that this was the fact; and we are sure, therefore, that this is what the apostle intended to express.

Again, Faith may be considered as the condition of our justification, as it has been sometimes called; but whether with propriety, may be doubted. If, by condition, is meant that which is required to the enjoyment of a blessing, that which must precede it in the order of time or of nature, it may be truly said, that faith is the condition of justification, because nothing more is intended than to express, in different words, the uniform doctrine of Scripture, that we are justified by faith. But the "condition" of any thing usually signifies that which, being done, gives us a right or title to it, because it possesses either intrinsic or conventional merit. To call faith, in this sense, the condition of our justification, would be worse than inaccurate; it would introduce human merit to the dishonour of Divine grace, and overthrow the doctrine so clearly taught in the New Testament. The term, condition, should therefore be avoided, because it is calculated to mislead the ignorant by suggesting ideas contrary to the truth of the gospel.

In the last place, Faith may be considered as the means or instrument of justification. The latter term especially has been frequently employed; and as both are of human origin, they have no other claim to be preferred but what arises from their fitness to express the office of faith. As a certain influence is ascribed to it in the justification of a sinner, and, at the same time, it is not the meritorious cause nor properly the condition, either of the terms

\* Rom. iv. 5.

conveys the idea of the part which it acts in this important affair. Those who believe in Christ are said to receive him, and faith is the instrument by which he is received. It is the hand with which we take the gift, which God freely bestows. Whatever term we use, the sole office of faith is to put us in possession of the righteousness of our Redeemer, not in the way of merit, but by a simple acceptance of it as presented and offered to us in the gospel.

It was the will of God that we should not be immediately justified on the ground of the obedience and death of his Son in our room, but that some act of our minds should precede the application of his merits to us. In a case of suretyship, the three following things are necessary; first, that the surety be willing to engage; secondly, that the person to whom the debt or service is owing be willing to accept of him instead of the principal; and thirdly, that the person for whom he becomes bound, consent that he should act for him. God was willing to accept of Christ as the substitute of sinners; Christ was willing to come under our obligations; and all that was farther necessary, was, that we should consent to his undertaking them. Our consent, indeed, was not necessary to his entering upon his office, nor was it possible that it could be given, as he assumed it before we existed; but it was necessary to our participation of the benefits of his suretyship. This consent is given by faith, which is our cordial approbation of his substitution and vicarious righteousness. And the reason of requiring faith will be evident, if we reflect, that, without this act of our minds, we could not conceive the effect of his suretyship to be communicated to us; for, how could a righteousness be imputed to us, or accounted ours, which we did not desire, and which we refused to accept?

We may observe how well adapted faith is to promote the great design of God in the justification of sinners, the glory of his grace. Between grace and works, there is an irreconcilable opposition, and the admission of the one involves the exclusion of the other. If we are justified by works, we are not justified freely; and the honour of grace, which gives without money and without price, is impaired. This would have been the effect if any act of ours had been made the condition of our justification, if we had been pardoned on account of our repentance and reformation, and restored to the favour of God on account of our love to him and sincere obedience to his law. But by the appointment of faith, the glory of grace is fully displayed. It cannot be supposed, that a poor man has any merit in taking the alms which are presented to him without his solicitation. It is not his acceptance which gives him a right to enjoy them, but the offer made by his charitable neighbour. It cannot be supposed, that there is any merit in consenting that Christ should perform for us what we could not perform for ourselves; any merit in relying on his obedience and sufferings, and acknowledging that there is nothing in ourselves which could recommend us to God. This consent to the suretyship of Christ, this dependence on his righteousness, is the essence of justifying faith. The wisdom of God is manifest in this constitution, which takes away from man every ground of boasting, abases his pride, and leads him to give all the praise to the true Author of salvation. Having saved us by his own arm, he makes it bare, if I may speak so, stretches it out openly, to make all men see that by it alone the mighty work was achieved. To the sinner nothing is left but to receive, with profound humility and gratitude, the precious gift which God most freely bestows. There is an express acknowledgment in the exercise of faith, that there is no goodness in himself for which God should be favourable to him; and he says, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."\*

\* Is. xlv. 24.



It may be added, that faith is not of ourselves, but “is the gift of God.”\* As if it were not enough to exclude works of every kind, and to appoint faith to be the means of obtaining an interest in Christ, lest we should boast of faith itself, through our strong natural disposition to set an undue value upon every thing which belongs to us, it is declared to be a gift, to the acquisition of which we contribute nothing, in the communication of which to us we are passive, and in exercising which we do not exert our own strength, but act in consequence of being acted upon by supernatural power. The glory of our salvation is thus appropriated to God without any deduction. It is his province to give all, and ours to receive all.

It remains to inquire whether any place should be assigned to repentance in our justification; and the inquiry is the more necessary, because nothing is more common than to speak of it as if it were the condition upon which the enjoyment of this blessing is suspended. It is supposed that Christ died “to give our sorrows weight,” or to render our repentance efficacious; language which imports, that through his mediation repentance is accepted as a sort of satisfaction for our sins, or as a reason why they should be pardoned. All our former reasoning tends to show that this opinion is erroneous. If all works are excluded from being the ground of our justification, repentance is not to be exempted. In refuting this opinion some make use of this argument, that repentance cannot be the condition of pardon, because the former does not go before but follows the latter; they think, that till a man believe in Christ and consequently be justified, he cannot truly repent. I shall not enter at present into the controversy respecting the order of these two graces, although it would be easy to show that those, who place justifying faith first, are encountered by difficulties and objections, which are not sufficiently removed by a hypothesis founded on what they conceive to be the necessary arrangement of the Divine operations in the application of redemption. Some men, while they profess the highest veneration for the standards of our Church, do not always conform to their language, but take the liberty in particular instances, to make use of a corrected, and, in their judgment, a more accurate phraseology. Let our standards be altered if they are wrong, but let not those who are most zealous to maintain their integrity, and reject any proposal of change, practise, without avowing it, what they openly denounce as a crime. “Although repentance,” says our Confession of Faith, “be not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God’s free grace in Christ, yet is it of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it.”† Not only is it asserted in general, that an impenitent sinner cannot be pardoned, but it is expressly stated that before he is pardoned he must cease to be impenitent. Whatever may be the order of faith and repentance, both must exist in the mind of the sinner who is justified; and indeed it is impossible to conceive any man to believe in Christ, without being duly affected with a sense of sin, of its vileness as well as of its guilt. He who is pardoned is a penitent like the publican in the parable, who said, “God be merciful to me a sinner;” he is not pardoned, however, for his repentance, but, as our Confession affirms, by an “act of God’s free grace in Christ.” God has no respect to his penitence as the cause for which he receives him into favour, but solely to the atonement and obedience of his Surety.

It may be objected, that, although the Scriptures do in many places speak as if we were justified by faith alone, yet there are other passages which appear to favour the doctrine of justification by works. It is said for example, that men shall be finally judged “according to their works;”‡ and our Lord represents the general judgment as proceeding upon this ground, when to the

\* Eph. ii. 8.

† Conf. ch. xv. §. 3.

‡ Rev. xx. 12.

sentence pronounced upon the righteous he subjoins an enumeration of their deeds of charity as the reason of it: "For I was an hungred and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink,"\* &c. But, besides that one part of Scripture should be explained consistently with another, and particular occasional expressions should be understood according to the general tenor of its doctrine, the apparent difficulty will vanish if we reflect upon the design of the judgment. Had nothing been intended except the distribution of rewards and punishments, this might have been accomplished without the publicity and solemnity of the grand assize; but the purpose of an assembly of the human race, of their arrangement in two divisions, and of the other proceedings of the great day, is to reveal the righteousness of God. It is to convince all, that the Judge of all the earth does right, by an open display of his justice. For this end, it is necessary that the works of the righteous should be brought forward to view, as well as those of the wicked; for something would be wanting to complete the transaction, if the sentence in the case of the latter were proved to be just by a detail of their crimes, but in the case of the former were founded only on their faith. The foundation, indeed, would be valid; but as faith is an act of the mind, although known to God it is unknown to all other beings, unless it be made manifest by its fruits. Now, as the object of the judgment is not merely to exercise justice, but to convince all the spectators of the awful scene that it is exercised, it is necessary that some sensible proof should be produced, which shall leave no doubt in their minds that those on the right hand were entitled to the happiness to which they are adjudged. Their good works will constitute this proof, not as being the ground of their title, but as the evidence that they are possessed of that faith to which eternal life was promised, because it was the appointed means of uniting them to the Saviour. This is the true reason why their works will be referred to in the judgment; and in this way we must account for the fact, if we would not set one part of Scripture at variance with another. Men will be judged according to their works; or a sentence will be passed upon them according to their state and character, of which their works will be the evidence.

There is another passage in which good works may seem to be represented as the foundation of our title to heaven. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, *that*—*ουτοι*—they may have *right*—*εξουσια*—to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."† *Εξουσια*, which is rendered *right*, is a word which bears a variety of senses, and may be translated *power*, *authority*, *liberty*, *privilege*. It does not necessarily convey the idea of right, in the common acceptance of the term; it may be understood simply to mean, that those who do the commandments shall have access to the tree of life, or shall enjoy the privilege of access to it. The meaning of the conjunction *ουτοι*, translated *that*, are also numerous. It denotes the final cause, or that for which any thing is done, or merely the event and issue of a thing, or it is used for the simple purpose of explanation: "Blessed are they that do his commandments." How does this appear? "They shall have access to the tree of life." Blessed are they who obey in the hope of eternal life, for eternal life shall be their gracious reward. This shall be the happy result. In the preceding context, our Lord declares, "that he will come quickly, and that his reward is with him, to give every man according as his work shall be."‡ Then follows the illustration. The righteous shall be admitted into the celestial city and partake of all its delights; but the wicked shall be excluded from it, "dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whoso ever loveth and maketh a lie."§ When the passage is thus explained, there is no difficulty in it. It merely states the happiness of those who obey in the

\* Matth. xxv. 35.

† Rev. xxii. 14.

‡ Ib. 12.

§ Ib. 15.



hope of eternal life, the great motive proposed in the gospel to excite and encourage us, for their labour shall not be in vain. It points out the character of the persons for whom future felicity is reserved.

The principal difficulty arises from the Epistle of James, who seems to teach a different doctrine from that of Paul, when he says, "Ye see how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."\* But that the contradiction is real, we cannot admit, without supposing that one of them was a false teacher; and we must therefore use our endeavours to reconcile them; as we are certain that the Spirit of God, by whom both were inspired, could not deliver contradictory oracles. Some pretend that Paul is an obscure writer, and that on this account we should give the preference to James. We know the cause of the complaints against the style and reasoning of the former. His doctrine is peculiarly offensive to self-righteous men; and they are eager to invalidate the authority of a teacher, who tells many plain and mortifying truths concerning the depravity of human nature, the insufficiency of our works, and the absolute necessity of an entire dependence upon the righteousness of Christ.

In order to show that the difference between the two Apostles is only apparent, and that their writings perfectly harmonize, I request your attention to the following remarks.

First, Paul and James had not the same design in view. From the Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Galatians, it appears to have been his design to show, that a sinner is pardoned, and accepted, and entitled to heaven, not on account of his works, but through faith in the blood of Christ and the imputation of his righteousness. And the reason why he insisted so much upon this doctrine, was, that it is a fundamental article of the Christian religion, and was strenuously opposed by certain teachers, who affirmed that men are saved by the righteousness of the law. James had a different object in view. He does not enter upon the consideration of the plan, by which a sinner is justified before God, but sets himself to oppose the improper use which has been made of the doctrine of salvation by grace. It appears that some, misunderstanding what was said concerning faith, had imagined that we are justified by a bare assent to the gospel, or that faith consisted in an orthodox belief. To the carnally minded this was a very acceptable notion, as it followed, that they might hope for eternal life although they continued in sin. Thus they turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. In opposition to a system which was subversive of all religion, the apostle maintains that good works are required from every disciple of Christ; and that nothing was more vain than for men to pretend that they were justified, while their faith was manifestly of such a nature as to leave them in a state of alienation from God. In a word, his design is not to inform a man how he shall obtain the favour of God, but to convince him, that if his faith is barren and dead he is in a state of condemnation, notwithstanding his profession and his hopes.

I remark, in the second place, That Paul and James do not speak of the same faith. Hence, although they ascribe different things to faith, although by the one it is represented as alone the instrument of our justification, and by the other as ineffectual without works, there is no contradiction in their writings, because they do not refer to the same subject. The faith which, according to Paul, is the instrument of our justification, is a fruit of the Spirit, the faith which is elsewhere termed "the faith of God's elect," "precious faith,"† wrought in us by the power which raised Jesus Christ from the grave; a living and active principle which purifies the heart and excites to universal obedience. But to the faith of which James speaks, these characters and exercises cannot

\* James ii. 24.

† Tit. i. 1. 2 Pet. i. 2.

be ascribed. The reason, indeed, why he affirms that men cannot be saved by it, is, that these properties do not belong to it. It is a dead faith, a body without the soul, a faith which is exhausted in an empty profession, and which he therefore compares to the inefficient charity which entertains the hungry and naked with compassionate words, but neither feeds nor clothes them. Such being the marked and essential difference between these two kinds of faith, there is no inconsistency in ascribing justification to the one, and denying it to the other. "If one," says an eminent divine, "affirms that fire will burn, and another denies it, there is no contradiction between them, whilst one intends real fire, and the other only that which is painted."

The last remark which I shall make, is still more conclusive, namely, that Paul and James do not speak of the same justification. Paul, as we have seen, discusses the important question, How we are justified before God, how we obtain the pardon of our sins, and acceptance? and he assigns these privileges "to grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."\* The inquiry of James relates to the kind of *faith* by which we are justified, and to the way in which it is evinced to be genuine. It does not treat of justification before God, but of justification before men. He asks, How other men shall know that we are justified? and answers, that they will know it by our works. That this is not a gratuitous assumption for the purpose of evading a difficulty, but is the true meaning of justification in the Epistle of James, is evident from the instances to which he appeals. The first is Abraham; concerning whom he says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God."† It deserves attention, that, while Abraham is said to have been justified by works, the Scripture is represented as fulfilled which affirms, that faith was imputed unto him for righteousness. These things seem to be contradictory; and they would be so if the apostle were speaking of his justification before God, because it would be attributed to two opposite causes, to works and to faith. But, if we consider him as referring to the justification of Abraham before men, the apparent contradiction will be removed, and this will be the meaning of the passage: "When Abraham believed in God, righteousness was imputed to him, and he was justified. This, however, was a secret transaction, known only to God and to his own conscience. But when he offered Isaac upon the altar, it was manifested to others; for this high act of obedience demonstrated that he was possessed of the living faith, to which the promise of salvation is made." To confirm this interpretation of the passage, let it be observed, that this justification of Abraham is said to have taken place at the time when he obeyed the command of God, to offer up in sacrifice his only-begotten son. Yet the Scripture declares that, thirty years before, as we learn from the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, he was justified by faith. But men are not twice justified by faith; and the inference is therefore unavoidable, that this second justification must relate to a different transaction,—his justification before men, the manifestation of the sincerity of his faith, and, consequently, of his acceptance with God; for faith can be shown only by our works. And thus you perceive in what sense his faith was made perfect by works. They did not supply any defect in it, and concur with it to recommend him to the favour of God; but they proved it to be perfect, or to be not a speculative opinion or listless assent, but a full and practical persuasion of the truth. The second instance which he produces, is Rahab: "Likewise also

\* Rom. v. 21.

† James ii. 21, 22.



was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?"\* In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are informed that she received them by faith.† How she came to the knowledge of Jehovah, the sacred historian has not told us; but it is certain that she did believe in him; and, because she believed in him, received the Israelitish spies into her house. She was therefore justified before their arrival. Hence, her justification by works must signify, as in the case of Abraham, the manifestation of her faith. By them she was justified before men, or proved to be a believer; but she was justified before God prior to the performance of them.

When we consider that Paul and James had different designs, and that they speak of different kinds of faith and justification, we perceive that, notwithstanding an apparent discrepancy, the doctrine of the one perfectly harmonizes with that of the other. When James affirms, that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,"‡ he does not contradict Paul, who asserts, that "we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law;"§ he simply lays down this important proposition, that it is not by a simple profession of faith that we can know a man to be in a state of favour with God, but by a profession accompanied with such good works as evince its sincerity. "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."|| No person of common understanding, and common candour, would charge two modern Divines with contradicting each other, if to the question, How are we justified before God? the one should answer, By faith; and to the question, How are we justified before men, or proved to be genuine believers? the other should answer, By works. It requires little sagacity to perceive, and only a little honesty to acknowledge, that, if Paul and James speak of the same subject, it is utterly impossible to reconcile them. The one or the other must be in an error; and, consequently, the one or the other must be erased from the list of the apostles, unless, with Unitarians, we will venture to deny their inspiration, and boldly maintain that they were liable to mistakes like other men. Had Paul and James been understood by the primitive Christians to treat of the same justification, their Epistles would not have been both received as divine. The one or the other would have been rejected. If two writings had appeared, in one of which it was affirmed that there are three persons in the Godhead, and in the other that there is only one person, both could not have been admitted into the canon, but the latter would have been pronounced to be the work of a heretic. Doubts were entertained of the Epistle of James by some individuals, probably because it seemed to be at variance with the doctrines of Paul; but it was received by the Jewish believers to whom it was addressed, as we learn from its insertion in the Syriac version, made, it is supposed, in the first or the beginning of the second century; and it has long been acknowledged by the whole Church as the genuine production of the apostle whose name it bears.

\* James ii. 25. † Heb. xii. 31. ‡ James ii. 24. § Rom. iii. 28. || James ii. 18.

## LECTURE LXXII.

## JUSTIFICATION.

Refutation of the Objection, that the Doctrine of Justification by Faith is injurious to Morality.

AGAINST the doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, objections have been advanced, some of which have been already considered. It might have been previously expected, that it would not have been quietly received; and that, mortifying as it is to the pride of man, it would call forth many attempts to set it aside, and to secure to him, if not the whole honour, at least some share in the glory of his salvation. Accordingly, no article of faith has given rise to more violent controversies, and been exhibited in a more odious light; endeavours having been used, not only to disprove it by direct argument, but to load it with consequences from which it may appear that it cannot be true. The consequences, indeed, which are adduced from a doctrine, ought not to be always admitted as a test of its truth, for they may be unfairly drawn, and may be false even when to us they seem to be legitimate, because the subject may be obscure, and we may take only a partial view of it; but if it could be clearly shown that a doctrine leads to vice and impiety, the proof would be complete that it did not emanate from the source of all purity, but that it was an invention of men, or a suggestion of the father of lies.

There is an objection which has been frequently urged against justification by grace, and which Paul, anticipating from his knowledge of the light in which the doctrine would be viewed by men of corrupt minds, has stated and refuted. The doctrine seems to wear an unfriendly aspect to holiness, for which some men profess great zeal, and would persuade us that they are deeply concerned for its interests. In many cases, the sincerity of this profession may be called in question without a breach of charity; because we find that those who are most eloquent in their declamations in favour of good works, are not distinguished by the practice of them; and that frequently the only proof which they give of attachment to them, consists in violent invectives against those who hold a different creed. At present, however, we shall confine our attention to their reasoning. If we are freely pardoned, they say, and if nothing is required of us that we should enjoy this blessing but to believe, this easy method of obtaining forgiveness will be an incitement to repeat our offences. May we not also be tempted to sin from the notion that, the more numerous our transgressions are, divine grace will be the more glorified in passing them by? If good works are not the condition of our restoration to the favour of God, and he is accepted who does not work, but believes, the most powerful inducement to perform them is taken away. It is the hope of being benefited by his labours, which rouses a person to active exertion. No consideration can be conceived more effectual to excite us to obedience, than the prospect of recommending ourselves to our Maker, and of being rewarded with a blessed immortality; but, if the prize is secured to us by the merit of another, nothing can be expected to follow but total remissness. Men, persuading themselves that they are justified by faith, will naturally conclude that good works are unnecessary, every purpose which they were intended to accomplish being effected by a different expedient. They will think that there is no hazard in neglecting them; and perhaps they will deem it their duty to neglect them, lest they should interfere with the righteousness of Christ, weaken



their feelings of dependence upon him, and create in their minds an idea of merit, by which his honour would be impaired.

This is the objection against our doctrine; and it is stated, I apprehend, in all its force. Justification by faith, without the works of the law, is injurious to the interests of morality, by weakening or destroying the motives to it. If the objection were well founded, if there were such an opposition between free justification and the necessity of holiness, as some men pretend, it would follow that our views are erroneous, and that what we call the Gospel of the grace of God is a licentious perversion of the truth. Paul, as we have already remarked, anticipated this objection; and it is not improbable that it was brought forward by some disputers in his days. Hence arises a strong presumption, that his doctrine and ours, in reference to this important article of religion, agree. There would have been no room for the objection, if he had taught that men are in any sense justified by works. Whatever other faults might have been found with his doctrine, it could not have been alleged that it had a tendency to set aside the obligations to duty; and if any person had been so stupid as to urge this objection, Paul would not have entered into an elaborate train of reasoning with a view to show that it was inapplicable, but would have thought it sufficient to state anew, that, according to him, good works were the condition of our restoration to the favour of God. After having declared that, "as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;"\* after having given the same view of justification which we have exhibited, he adds, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."†

Decisive, however, as this objection is accounted, and triumphantly as it is displayed as a complete refutation of our doctrine, it is easy to show that it discovers rather the ignorance of those who advance it, than the strength of their cause. Three things are taken for granted, which are grossly and palpably false. It is presumed, that, if good works are not necessary to the justification of a sinner, they are not necessary for any other purpose, and are altogether useless; that justification and sanctification may be separated, or that a man may be received into the favour of God and yet continue unholy; and that the doctrine of justification by grace does not supply motives of sufficient efficacy to insure our obedience. If the reverse of these assumptions can be proved, the objection falls to the ground; and although we be justified by faith, the interests of holiness are effectually secured.

First, It is assumed that, unless good works are the condition of justification, there is no other reason of sufficient efficacy to induce us to perform them. It is not a little strange that this idea should be adopted, especially by persons who have much to tell us concerning eternal and immutable morality, by which they mean, that morality is founded in the nature of things, is independent of time, and place, and circumstances, and is of perpetual obligation,

\* Rom. v. 18, 19.

† Rom. vi. 1—7.

whatever may be the condition of intelligent beings. It does not well accord with their fine declamations concerning the intrinsic beauty of virtue, the satisfaction which it imparts to the mind, and which more than compensates the difficulties and sacrifices attending the practice of it, and the disinterested character of a good man, who will cultivate virtue for its own sake. These speculations have vanished into air, and it is confessed by the authors of them that virtue requires a more substantial recommendation than its own charms; that it is in fact a calculation of interest; and that unless it hold out the prospect of solid advantage, it will have no authority upon our consciences, no attractions for our hearts. Hence we learn what are the real sentiments and feelings of the objectors, for they virtually acknowledge, that notwithstanding their pretended zeal for good works, they would not hold them in estimation were it not for their consequences; that they do not set a value upon them for their intrinsic worth, but solely because they are the means by which their own happiness will be promoted. This is a fair inference from their objection; for they unquestionably judge from themselves, when they say, that, if men are once persuaded that works are not the condition of eternal life, they will consider themselves as loosed from any obligation to perform them. They conclude that other men would act in this manner, because they are conscious that such would be their own conduct.

But although they can perceive no reason for the performance of good works, if they are not the meritorious cause of our justification, those who have studied the Scriptures, and imbibed their spirit, entertain a different opinion.

Obedience to the divine law is our indispensable duty, without any reference to our own interest. Nothing is more contrary to reason and piety than to suppose, that moral obligation is founded on a contract between us and our Maker, by which we engage to fulfil certain services in consideration of certain advantages. The idea assumes what is false—that we are independent beings, and voluntarily enter into an engagement to give what we might withhold. If God is the author of our existence and faculties, he has undoubted right to prescribe the purpose for which we should use those faculties, and his will constitutes a permanent obligation. The reason why we should obey is not that we expect a recompense from him, but that being our Creator he is our Sovereign Lord, to whose commands we should implicitly bow. There is no doubt that a creature would be bound to obey, although he knew that next moment he should be annihilated. The truth is, that what we do is not obedience, unless it be done from respect to his will; for to obey is to execute the orders of a superior because they are his orders, and not because they will be productive of some advantage to ourselves. And this is in fact the consideration by which true Christians are influenced. They think principally of their duty, regarding their interest as a subordinate consideration, and conform to the precepts of the law because the authority which enjoins them is sacred in their eyes. Hence it appears, that, although good works should not be the condition of justification, the reason for performing them remains in all its force. By them we discharge the debt of obedience which we owe to the Author of our being.

Again, obedience is the return which is due to God for his innumerable favours. The objectors seem to think that the expectation of new blessings is a powerful excitement to duty, but that the remembrance of past blessings will have no such effect. It is acknowledged that men are very apt to forget the kindness of a benefactor; but bad as human nature is, instances of gratitude are not uncommon, and many a willing service is performed under the influence of this feeling. In particular, we might calculate upon its powerful operation in those who have received from God the remission of their sins, and a right



to eternal life, and whose hearts have been softened and made susceptible of every good impression by the Spirit of grace. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" is a question which a justified man will naturally ask; and knowing that obedience is the most acceptable return, "he will make haste, and not delay to keep his commandments." The objection makes no allowance for the operation of gratitude, and supposes men, even when brought under the power of religion, to be entirely governed by selfishness. But true believers enter into the spirit of the apostolic exhortation, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."\*

In the next place, by obedience we glorify God, and recommend religion to our fellow-men: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."† While we thus pay to God the homage which he claims, and recognise him as a Being of essential purity, which is the glory of his nature, our conduct is calculated to make an impression upon others, and to induce them seriously to consider their obligations, and to endeavour, through Divine assistance, to fulfil them: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."‡ These are reasons which will influence those who reflect, that the end of all the works of God is his glory; and that as it is passively promoted by the inferior parts of the creation, in which his perfections are displayed, so it is the sacred duty of intelligent beings to contribute to it actively, by the dedication of their faculties to his service. In answering the objection, we are perpetually reminded of the narrow contracted views from which it has proceeded. What is not immediately related to themselves, does not fall under the contemplation of the objectors. Why should they glorify God, unless it can be shown that some benefit will accrue to them? They who reason in this manner, furnish the clearest evidence that they do not understand the enlightened and liberal principles of genuine piety, and are actuated by the mercenary spirit of slaves. It is certain that the spirit of a Christian would not have dictated the objection which we are at present refuting.

I remark, in the last place, that the consideration which appears to the objectors to be alone of any force to excite men to obedience, a regard to their own interest, is not wanting, according to the doctrine of justification by faith. Although good works are not the foundation of our title to eternal life, yet they are intimately connected with our happiness, and contribute to promote it. To a believer, holiness is an evidence of the existence of Divine grace in his heart, of the sincerity of his faith, and consequently of his interest in the favour of God. "Hereby perceive we that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."§ It is his qualification for communion with God, between whom and a creature polluted with sin there can be no comfortable intercourse. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."|| If the joys of fellowship with God will not excite men to their duty, the promise of heaven itself, as their reward, would have as little effect; for heaven, rightly understood, is a continuation of the pleasures of devotion, and cannot be an object of desire unless those pleasures are prized above all earthly delights. And this leads me to state, that when we have abandoned the idea of good works being the condition of future happiness, there remains this strong reason for performing them, that they are indispensably necessary to prepare us for it; for this is the law, from which there is no exemption, that, "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."¶ He who trusts in the merit of the Saviour, feels himself impelled to the cultivation

\* 1 Cor. vi. 20.

† 1 John iii. 19.

‡ John xv. 8.

§ 1 John i. 7.

¶ Matt. v. 16.

¶ Heb. xii. 14.

of holiness as powerfully as if his title to heaven had depended upon it. What would a right to it avail if he were incapable of enjoying it? and what joy would the presence of God give to a man who was not assimilated to him by the renovation of his soul? Sin, which is the source of our disquietudes and sorrows upon earth, would render us miserable even in the region of blessedness.

If, then, there are so many purposes which holiness serves, and which are, consequently, reasons for practising it, we do not set aside good works by excluding them from our justification. We are not so foolish as to think that they are useful for nothing, because they are not useful for every thing. This, however, is the import and the strength of the objection which is advanced against our doctrine with so much confidence. If we are not justified by works, they may be dismissed as superfluous.

In the second place, it is taken for granted by those who urge the objection, that justification and sanctification may be separated, or that a man, who is received into the favour of God, may continue unholy. If it can be shown that this supposition is false, the objection falls to the ground. In reasoning concerning the Divine dispensations, we ought not to admit arbitrary hypotheses, but should endeavour to ascertain what is the established order of things. Men may conceive, through ignorance, a sinner to be justified without being sanctified, or his state to be changed while there is no change in his character, and on this ground may prove the dangerous consequences of maintaining the doctrine of justification by grace. Here is a man who is the object of the love of God, but is in an unregenerated state, and possesses a right to a blessed immortality, although he is living in sin. Were this the true state of the case, it might be justly said of our doctrine, that it leads to licentiousness, and must therefore have originated in human ignorance or depravity. But the separation exists only in theory, and affords an instance of the false alarms which men frequently experience from phantoms of their own imagination.

The Scriptures represent the two blessings as closely connected, and as enjoyed at the same time: "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."\* When they draw the character of justified persons, the description points, not only to their interest in the Divine favour, but also to the holy exercises in which they are engaged: "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit;"† that is, they are not carnal, but spiritual; they are not governed by the desires and volitions of corrupt nature, but by the principles of grace. It was not the intention of the apostle to state the ground on which they are exempt from condemnation, but to inform us of the moral qualities of the persons to whom this privilege belongs. To be under grace, and not under the law, or, in other words, to be delivered from the curse of the law and restored to the favour of God, is represented as a state which secures us from the reigning power of sin: "Sin shall not have the dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."‡ The faith by which we are justified is said to be a living faith, which manifests itself in holiness of life, while the faith which is alone, the faith which is not productive of good works as its native fruit, is pronounced to be useless to its possessor: "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."§

The inseparable connection between justification and sanctification, is farther manifest from the consideration, that a sinner cannot be justified till he believe; and that as faith is a supernatural grace, it cannot exist without the communication of the Spirit to the soul. But the Spirit, if I may be allowed to

\* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

† Rom. viii. 1.

‡ Ib. vi. 14.

§ James ii. 26.



use figurative language, does not come alone ; he brings all his graces, or as the Scripture calls them, his fruits along with him, infusing not only faith, but also hope and love ; and thus he sows the seeds of holiness, which immediately spring up and yield a rich harvest of good works. Those who maintain that the doctrine of justification by faith is unfriendly to holiness, have adopted unscriptural ideas of faith. They suppose it to be a mere assent of the understanding to a proposition supported by evidence, and do not seem to know, that the faith of which we speak, is an act which proceeds from a principle of spiritual life in the heart. The justified person was dead in trespasses and sins, but is now alive ; his nature is changed as well as his state ; he is delivered from the power as well as from the guilt of sin ; and his faith, which embraces the righteousness of Christ, works by love to God and man, as naturally as a tree puts forth buds, and leaves, and blossoms, and fruit. The objection which we are considering betrays deplorable ignorance of the operations of grace ; and those who have derived their ideas of faith, its origin and efficacy, from the Scriptures, will hardly consider it as worthy of a serious refutation. What method can be conceived more effectual to secure the performance of good works, than the communication of the Spirit of holiness ?

Hence, we perceive how false it is to charge the doctrine of justification by faith, with giving encouragement to the neglect of our duty. According to the immutable law of heaven, he who is justified, is also sanctified ; and he cannot be justified, because he cannot believe, till he receive the Holy Ghost, by whom he is enabled "to put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."\*

In the third place, It is presumed that the doctrine of justification by faith, does not supply any motive of sufficient efficacy to restrain us from sin, and to excite us to obedience. Nothing, however, is more easy than to show that the idea is unfounded.

First, This doctrine furnishes a most powerful motive to restrain us from sin, by exhibiting it in such a light as is calculated to inspire the utmost abhorrence of it. The pardon of sin is granted in justification ; but it is granted solely on the ground of the atonement of Christ. We are thus reminded that sin is offensive to God in the highest possible degree, since nothing could induce him to forgive it but the dreadful sacrifice of his only-begotten Son. His wrath could not be appeased but by the shedding of his precious blood. Were God to pardon us upon repentance, it would appear, indeed, that he had been displeased ; but we should naturally conclude, that he was not much offended ; since, on so slight a ground as our sorrow, and confession, and amendment, he was willing to cancel what is past. It is not a very aggravated fault for which repentance will atone. But now, when death is demanded, and that the death not of a mere man, but of the Lord of glory, what can we infer but that the Divine detestation of sin is infinite ? And can we believe this awful truth, and at the same time persist in the love and practice of sin ? It is impossible. Men may sin when the scene of the crucifixion is forgotten ; but they will not sin when it is fresh in their remembrance. Upon a regenerated heart its power is irresistible. A believer will not transgress while the terrors of Divine wrath are displayed before his eyes, and a most impressive demonstration is given of the contrariety of sin to the will and nature of God. He is delivered, indeed, from its penal effects ; but he is delivered by such means as must inspire him with abhorrence of its vileness and dread of its consequences.

Secondly, This doctrine supplies a strong motive to obedience, by remind-

\* Eph. iv. 22, 24.

ing us that the obligation to it is immutable, and can, upon no account, be dispensed with. Justification by faith proceeds upon the ground of the previous fulfilment of the law by Jesus Christ in the character of our Surety. Although to us the gift of eternal life is free, and nothing is required but that we should accept it with humble gratitude, yet, in respect of our Redeemer, it is the reward of the fulfilment of the condition upon which it was originally promised. The plan of justifying a sinner, according to the Gospel, does not set aside the moral law or abate its demands; but, on the contrary, it recognises its authority, and magnifies it by a righteousness commensurate to its requisitions. The dispensation of grace is not intended to throw any reflection upon the dispensation of the law; but, while it provides a remedy for the evil caused by the violation of the law, it gives a full sanction to its claims, and exhibits the original constitution as worthy of its Author, a bright display of his justice and holiness. From the terms prescribed to our Saviour we learn, that God could not dispense with obedience, even in favour of those whom he loved. How then is it supposed that our doctrine is unfavourable to holiness? Does it teach us to disregard the precepts of the law, by carrying its authority to the greatest possible height? Does it present a temptation to withhold obedience, by showing that God loves it as much as he loves the exercise of mercy; and that, full of compassion as he is, he would not relieve mankind from their misery, unless the rights of his law were respected and established? By reminding us that obedience was required from our Surety as the condition of our restoration to the favour of God, does it authorize us to conclude that, when we are admitted into a justified state, the obligation to it is dissolved, and we may safely trample the precept under foot? These certainly are inferences which cannot be logically deduced from the premises; but in this manner they must reason who affirm, that the doctrine of justification by grace tends to licentiousness.

In the third place, The doctrine of free justification is calculated to awaken gratitude and love to the Author of our Salvation. The value of the blessing is inestimable, and it is bestowed without money and without price. No condition, properly so called, is prescribed; but all that is required is, that we should believe in him, "who suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."\* Had some condition been enjoined, our sense of the Divine goodness would have been weaker, as less grace would have appeared in conferring the blessing; and the selfish idea of merit would have shed its paralysing influence upon the emotions of the heart. But now, when grace shines with undiminished lustre, and the sinner knows that he is indebted to it alone for the remission of his manifold offences, and the hope of a blessed immortality, will not all that is within him be stirred up to glorify his Divine Benefactor? God will appear to him worthy of the most ardent love, and of the best return which he can make for his wonderful and unmerited kindness. He will not dream of recompensing him; for, in this respect, our goodness extends not to God; but the principle of his conduct will be a desire to express the gratitude which he feels, and to do what he can for the honour of him who has done all for his salvation. When gratitude is excited, and the feeling is strong, compliance with the will of a benefactor is secured. On this ground we affirm, that the doctrine of justification by grace directly tends to advance the interests of holiness. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" The pardoned sinner will say, 'I owe every thing to him; and I am willing to do any thing for him.' "If a man love me, he will keep my words."† Those who have no love to God, can be impelled to obey him only by love to themselves. But a Christian acts upon a more generous plan. He loves God, because God has

\* 1 Pet. iii. 18.

† John xiv. 23.



loved him; and hence, like his Lord and Master, he delights to do his will, and his law is in his heart. That doctrine which is best fitted to beget and cherish love to God, is best calculated to promote the interests of holiness. There is no doctrine, therefore, so favourable to good works, as that of justification by grace.

Lastly, The doctrine of justification by faith encourages us to obey, by giving us the sure hope of acceptance. Men will not engage in vain labour, knowing it to be vain. If success be doubtful, their spirits will flag, and their exertions will be languid; but hope will give life, and vigour, and perseverance in their efforts. According to the doctrine of justification by works, we obey in great uncertainty; we know not what will be the result; our endeavours may prove abortive, our services may be found defective, and be rejected on trial. But according to the doctrine of justification by faith, we obey in the full confidence of gracious acceptance. Believers already enjoy the favour of God through the Saviour, in whom they trust. They do not work for a prize that may be lost, for their title to it is secure; but from gratitude, because it is secure, and they know that their hopes will be realized in the eternal possession of it. They know that the curse of the law is repealed, and consequently, that the great obstacle to the acceptance of their persons and services is removed. They know that, although their works, being imperfect, would be rejected if performed as the condition of the favour of God and future happiness, they will be pleasing to him as testimonies of filial duty and of love without dissimulation. They know that Jesus Christ intercedes for them in the heavenly sanctuary, and recommends their services to his Father by perfuming them with the incense of his merit. By these considerations their hearts are enlarged, and they go forward with ease and delight in the way of the commandments. "They therefore so run, not as uncertainly; they so fight not as one that beateth the air."\* They are under the eye of an approving witness and a gracious rewarder. They are "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord."†

It may be thought that an objection so manifestly unfounded, as every person perceives who has carefully and dispassionately studied the subject, is not worthy of a serious refutation. But as it has a plausible sound, is often brought forward, and is calculated to make an impression upon the ignorant and superficial, it is proper that we should be furnished with arguments in reply to it, for the vindication of truth and the removal of prejudice.

The question concerning the tendency of the two opposite systems, might be submitted to the decision of experience. The most imposing speculations turn out to be the dreams of fancy, when they are contradicted by facts. I do not say that all those who maintain justification by works are careless of them; but it is certain, that where this doctrine is taught and believed there is commonly a deplorable want of morality; there is little or no appearance of personal and family religion; and the law of God, although magnified in words, is generally disregarded in practice. I would not say, that all who hold justification by faith abound in good works, for men may profess the doctrine without cordially believing it and feeling its power; but it cannot be denied, that where the doctrine is sincerely embraced there is much serious concern for the salvation of the soul, great diligence in observing the ordinances of grace, and attention to personal and relative duties. The result is exactly the reverse of what some men had calculated, and on some occasions, they have been unable to conceal their surprise and mortification. It is a good remark, that worldly men trust in good works without doing them, and believers do good works

\* 1 Cor. ix. 26.

† Ib. xv. 58.

without trusting in them. However strange the fact may appear, those who understand the Scriptures are at no loss to account for it. The one system cannot purify the heart, because it is false; the other being true, is the power of God unto salvation.

"Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Love!  
The grand morality is love of thee."\*

So speaks the poet, and he expresses the feeling of every Christian. That doctrine which eminently displays the love of God to the unworthy, creates a deep sense of our high obligations to the Saviour, and fixes our attention upon him as our hope and our life as well as our great exemplar, is the most powerful engine which ever was contrived for rousing the energies of the soul. You may expect every thing from a willing mind; and there is no reason to fear that they will fail to perform their duty, punctually, cheerfully, and steadily, who can say, "The Love of Christ constraineth us."†

In the days of the apostle James there were men, as we have seen in a former lecture,‡ who imagined that they should be saved by faith without works, from a gross misapprehension of the doctrine of grace; and there have not been wanting successors to them, who have not only imitated their example by trampling upon the precepts of religion, but have adopted the fallacious principle, that the obligations of holiness are superseded by the plan of justifying sinners which the gospel reveals. The strong inclination of the human heart to sin, eagerly lays hold of every pretext to indulge itself, and proceeds to such a degree of impiety as to claim a sanction even from God himself, and to shelter itself under the patronage of religion, thus setting God at variance with himself, and introducing war between the different parts of his word, as if the good news by Jesus Christ were a repeal of the law promulgated from the beginning as the rule of righteousness to mankind. The abusers of divine grace have been called Antinomians, or opponents of the law, which, according to them, has lost its power to bind believers to obedience. The name has been ignorantly or malignantly given to those who abhorred the tenet of which it is expressive; and nothing is more common than to call men Antinomians, because they affirm that we are justified by faith without works, although they openly maintain, and prove by their conduct, that they are sincere in maintaining, that believers are bound to yield obedience to the precepts, and are far more zealous of the law in practice than their adversaries. But it is to be lamented, that there have been, and at this moment are, professed Christians who dare openly to teach, that believers are exempted from the law in every sense. On this point, we are as much opposed to them as Arminians are, and have cause to complain of injustice, when we are confounded under the same denomination. We have satisfactorily shown, that our doctrine leads to no such consequence; and publicly declare, that while we expect to be saved only by grace, this grace teaches "us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."§

\* Young's Night Thoughts, N. iv.

† Lect. lxxi.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 14.

§ Titus ii. 12—14.



## LECTURE LXXIII.

## ON ADOPTION

Adoption, a part of Justification—Meaning of the term, “Sons of God”—The Practice and Nature of Adoption among Men—Definition and Explanation of the Spiritual Privilege of Adoption—The Benefits flowing from it.

HAVING illustrated at considerable length, the doctrine of justification, I proceed to consider another privilege of believers in Christ, namely, Adoption. There are two reasons why I shall direct your attention to it: first, because it is expressly mentioned in the Scriptures as one of the blessings of redemption; and secondly, because a place is commonly assigned to it in systems of Theology. At the same time, it appears to me to be virtually the same with justification, and to differ from it merely in the new view which it gives of the relation of believers to God, and in the peculiar form in which it exhibits the blessings to which they are entitled. As it implies a change of state, it must be the same; for this change can take place but once; and whether we say that a sinner passes from a state of guilt and condemnation into a state of favour with God, or that he is translated from the family of Satan into the family of heaven, we express the same fact, and only diversify the terms. He who is justified is adopted, and he who is adopted is justified. But as the Scriptures make use of the term adoption, to denote the change of relation which takes place when we are effectually called, and believers are often exhibited in the character of the children of God, the subject is well worthy of our attention, and has a claim to a separate illustration.

There are different grounds on which men receive the designation of the Sons of God. First, they are so called on account of their relation to him as their Maker. “Have we not all one Father? and hath not one God created us?”\* It is for this reason that, in the third chapter of Luke, where the genealogy of our Saviour is recorded, the Evangelist having traced it up to the progenitor of the human race, by stating in the usual form that such a man was the son of such another man, concludes by saying of Adam, “which was the son of God.”† And for the same reason, angels are called his sons. “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”‡ Again, the designation of sons of God is given to men in consequence of the external relation in which they stand to him as his people, and the favour with which he regards them. This is obviously the import of the message which God commanded Moses to deliver to Pharaoh. “Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born.”§ It is intimated in these words, that he had chosen the Israelites to be his peculiar people; that he regarded them with peculiar affection, and purposed to bestow upon them distinguished marks of his favour; and that this was the reason why he commanded the king of Egypt to give them liberty to depart, and why he would himself interpose by miracles to effect their deliverance. In the New Testament they are described as the children of the kingdom; and on the same ground the character of the sons of God may now be given to the members of the visible church, who are externally in covenant with him, and have been symbolically admitted into his family by baptism. There remains another mode in which men are constituted the sons of God, namely, by adoption. The term is ap-

\* Mal. ii. 10.

† Luke iii. 38.

‡ Job xxxviii. 4. 7.

§ Exod. iv. 22.

plied indeed to the son-ship of the Israelites, "to whom," as Paul says, "per-  
tained the adoption,"\* because God took them into a relation to himself, in  
which they did not naturally stand; but it is used in its proper sense and full  
import, in reference only to believers in Christ. "When the fulness of the  
time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the  
law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adop-  
tion of sons."† And the same apostle says in another place, "He hath  
chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy  
and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adop-  
tion of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of  
his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us ac-  
cepted in the Beloved."‡

"To adopt a person," as Kennet says in his *Roman Antiquities*, "was to  
take him in the room of a son, and to give him a right to all the privileges  
which accompanied that title. Now the wisdom of the Roman constitution  
made this matter a public concern. When a man had a mind to adopt another  
into his family, he was obliged to draw up his reasons, and to offer them to  
the college of the Pontifices for their approbation. If this was obtained, on  
the motion of the Pontifices, the consul, or some other prime magistrate, brought  
in a bill at the *Comitia Curiata*, to make the adoption valid. The private  
ceremony consisted in buying the person to be adopted, of his parents, for  
such a sum of money formally given and taken; and Suetonius tells us, that  
Augustus purchased his grandsons Caius and Lucius of their father Agrippa." It  
may be added to this account, that the parties appeared before the prætor,  
when the intended father said, "Art thou willing to become my son?" and the  
son answered, "I am willing." The relation was thus formed according to  
law, and the adopted son entered into the family of his new father, assumed  
his name, became subject to his authority, and was entitled to the whole of the  
inheritance, or to a share of it if there were any other sons.

I have referred to this practice as existing among the Romans, and sanction-  
ed by the laws of the state; but it was not peculiar to them. It appears to  
have prevailed among the Greeks, the Egyptians, and, I believe, some other  
nations. We have an example of adoption among the Egyptians in the case  
of the daughter of Pharaoh the king, concerning whom it is related that, having  
accidentally found the infant Moses exposed on the banks of the Nile, she gave  
him to his mother to be nursed; and that when the child grew, his mother  
brought him to her, "and he became her son."§ He was thus admitted a  
member of the royal family, and it is mentioned as a proof of the power of his  
faith, that he renounced this high honour, and chose to take part with his own  
nation in their afflictions, because they were the people of God: "By faith  
Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's  
daughter;|| sacrificed the glory and the advantages which he already possessed,  
and had the prospect of enjoying, in consequence of his adoption. It is the  
opinion of some, that the term adoption in the New Testament, is not borrowed  
from the Greeks and Romans, but is founded on the style of the Old Testa-  
ment, in which, as we have seen, the Israelites are called the sons of God.  
But it is more probable that, as the New Testament was intended for the use  
of the Gentiles as well as the Jews, it was the design of the writers, when they  
employed a word familiar to the latter, to refer to the thing denoted by it as it  
was practised among them, and thus to convey to them an intelligible idea of  
the spiritual relation between God and the objects of his favour.

Adoption, according to the scriptural sense of the term, is an act of God, by  
which he pronounces sinful men to be his sons, admits them into his family,

\* Rom. ix. 4.    † Gal. iv. 4, 5.    ‡ Eph. i. 4—6.    § Exod. ii. 10.    || Heb. xi. 24.



and gives them a right to the privileges of his children. With a view to illustrate this general definition, I request your attention to the following particulars.

First, As an adopted son originally belonged to a different family from that into which he was admitted, we must inquire from what family the children of God are taken. We might say, then, that they are of the family of Adam, understanding by this expression, not merely that they are his natural offspring, his sons and daughters by lineal descent, but that they were born in his image, and after his likeness, and derive from him the guilt, the pollution, and the curse, which he hath bequeathed to them as a fatal inheritance. We might accommodate to our present purpose the words of God to his ancient people, "Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged."\* "Look unto Adam your father, and unto Eve that conceived you in sin, and brought you forth in iniquity." The Scriptures give another view of the subject; and pronounce all men in their fallen state to be the children not only of Adam, but of him by whose artifice they were reduced to their present condition; "Ye are of your father the devil,"† said our Lord to the Jews. "Ye boast of your connexion with Abraham, and found upon it the hope of acceptance with God; but your conduct proves you to be the genuine offspring of the enemy of all righteousness;" for he adds, "the works of your father ye do." Lest, however, we should suppose that this character is applicable to them alone on account of their peculiar depravity manifested in the rejection of the Messiah, the Scripture is careful to comprehend all unregenerated men under the same denomination: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."‡ To the justness of this description in reference to notorious transgressors, few will be disposed to object. In their blasphemy, their profaneness, their malice, their envy, their violence and cruelty, we distinctly perceive the horrid features of the spirit of darkness. But pride, self-confidence, a dislike of the divine character and laws, repugnance to the will of our Maker, and a constant inclination to sin, which are found in every man who has not been born again, are indications not less certain, that we are guided by the counsels and actuated by the temper of the first rebel against the righteous government of God. "He is the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience."§ All the children of disobedience, therefore, are his sons. Although they may disown their relation, they daily recognise it by their unholy thoughts and actions, and unless divine mercy interpose, will receive the inheritance of wrath, which is their allotted portion.

Secondly, as an adopted son became a member of a new family, so he upon whom this spiritual privilege is conferred, is enrolled among the children of God. Like the prodigal, who had gone into a far country, and, having there wasted his substance in riotous living, was reduced to extreme distress, he returns, or rather by Divine Grace is brought back, to the house of his heavenly Father; and his father, to adopt the language of the parable, falling on his neck and embracing him in the arms of his love, does not place him in the condition of a servant, but restores him to the name and the right of a son. And, how glorious is this family to which we are re-united! First in dignity and honour is Jesus Christ himself, who, in his Divine Person, is the eternal Son of God, and, in his mediatorial character, stands in a particular relation to believers. The Scripture calls him "the first born among many brethren," intimating, that he belongs to the heavenly family, in which he claims precedence, and holds the most distinguished place. He is the Elder Brother; for

\* Is. li. 1.

† John viii. 44.

‡ 1 John iii. 8, 10.

§ Eph. ii. 2.

he and the other children, or those of them who are taken from among men are partakers of a common nature; and for this cause "he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."\* Next in order are those glorious beings, who, having retained their purity and fidelity, have continued, without interruption, to enjoy the honour and felicity of their primeval state. Angels are the sons of God, as we formerly remarked, and constitute an illustrious portion of the family, distinguished by the excellence of their nature, the superiority of their endowments, the ardour of their love, and their unwearied activity. To them we are united by adoption; for the inhabitants of heaven, and the saints upon earth, compose one holy society, under the protection and government of him in whom all things are gathered together. Lastly, There are the saints triumphant and militant, who, although separated from one another in place, a part being in a state of manhood while the other part can be considered as only in infancy, are all invested with the same high character, and stand in the same relation to God. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the prophets and apostles, the martyrs and confessors, and believers of every age and nation, are associated in one great brotherhood. Taken by sovereign grace from the degraded and ruined family to which we naturally belonged, we are introduced into the fellowship of the most glorious creatures in the universe, the bright spirits who minister before the throne of the Eternal in heaven, and the happy men upon whom his own hand has impressed the image of his perfection. "Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."† How wonderful the change which takes place in adoption, whether we consider it in itself, or in its consequences! "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."‡

We have seen that spiritual, like civil adoption, consists in translating a person from the family in which he was born, into that of a stranger.

In the case of civil adoption, the translation was made at the desire, and by the authority, of the person who, having no children of his own, had recourse to this expedient to supply the want. In like manner, the admission of sinners into the family of heaven, is the act of God, by whom we are blessed with all spiritual blessings. It is an act of his grace and authority; of his grace, in choosing persons so unworthy to enjoy this high honour; of his authority, in dissolving their original connexion, and constituting a new relation between them and himself. Birth, external privileges, corporeal and mental accomplishments, and the suffrages of others, cannot elevate us to this dignity. "We are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."§ The same sentence which acquits us from guilt and restores us to favour, invests us with the privilege of sonship and all the blessings attached to it. "It shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God."||

The meritorious cause of adoption, is the mediation of Christ, as we learn from the words formerly quoted: "God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."\*\* By taking our nature, Jesus has raised it from its fallen state, in which it was di-

\* Heb. ii. 11, 12.  
§ John i. 13.

† Ib. xii. 22—24.  
|| Hos. i. 10.

‡ 1 John iii. 1.  
\*\* Gal. iv. 5.



vested of its glory, and so depraved that its Maker could not hold communion with it. Its dignity is restored in the person of our Saviour; and, through him, it is now worthy to stand in the presence of God, and to be distinguished by the tokens of his love. But this is not all. He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, and procured that the forfeiture of our sonship should be reversed. He has made satisfaction for our sins, and not only appeased the anger of God, but, by his infinitely valuable obedience, obtained for us all the blessings of salvation. "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."\* His righteousness, imputed to believers, gives them a title to the precious fruits of his death; and the union with him, which is formed by the Spirit, places them in the same relation to God with himself. "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."†

The last remark which I shall make, relates to the means by which we obtain the actual possession of the privilege of adoption. We have seen that, in civil adoption, the consent of the person to be adopted was demanded, and publicly expressed. Something similar takes place in spiritual adoption. The privilege is offered to us in the Gospel; but it does not become ours till we accept of it. Although we do not, and cannot merit it, yet our consent is required, and is indispensably necessary. Now, this consent consists in faith, which implies our cordial acceptance of the blessings which Christ purchased for us, and of which God makes a free gift to us in the Gospel. Hence, to believe in Christ, and to receive him, are used in the Scriptures as equivalent terms. 'Art thou willing,' God says, 'that I shall be thy Father?' The believing sinner answers, 'I am willing.' "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."‡ Now, they are no longer aliens and outcasts, but the members of his family, the objects of his affection and care, and heirs of the glory which shall be revealed. "They are called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord hath named."§

We have traced some points of resemblance between human adoption and our admission into the family of God; but there are some respects in which they differ, and to these I shall now direct your attention.

First, It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the primary cause of adoption among men does not exist in the present case. It was the want of children which gave rise to the practice, and the object in view was to provide, by this expedient, what nature had denied. But this reason cannot for a moment be supposed to have had an influence in procuring our adoption by our heavenly Father; for, besides that he is self-sufficient, and had always a Son, who is his perfect image, and with whom he maintains an intercourse of love, which is the source of ineffable and infinite blessedness; all the creatures in the universe could make no addition to his felicity, and have nothing to present but what they have first received from his bounty. The Divine nature, although single, is not solitary, and possesses in its own fulness the materials of perfect and perpetual bliss.

Secondly, Human adoption was founded on good qualities, real or supposed, in the object; for we cannot conceive any man to have chosen another to be his son, who did not appear to him worthy of this honour. The Scriptures are careful to impress upon our minds the difference with respect to spiritual adoption, by drawing, with the darkest colours, the original character of those upon whom the blessings of salvation are bestowed. It was necessary, as we

\* Eph. ii. 13, 19.

† John xx. 17.

‡ 1b. i. 12.

§ Isa. lxii. 2.

learn from a passage already quoted, that men should be redeemed from the curse, in order to receive the adoption of sons. They were under a sentence of condemnation for their sins; and appearing to the eye of God guilty and polluted, what could they present to attract his regard? Like the prodigal, they were covered with rags and bloated with crimes, when he was pleased, in his infinite goodness, to receive them into his family. It is on this account that the Apostle John breaks out into the language of admiration when meditating upon the subject: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."\*

In the third place, adoption among men commonly extended only to a single person, or, at most, to a very limited number, for obvious reasons. But spiritual adoption is a privilege enjoyed by thousands and millions. It was the design of God, in appointing Jesus Christ to be the author of our salvation, to bring many sons to glory. To the question, "Are there few that be saved?"† our Lord declined to return a direct answer, because it was dictated by a spirit of curiosity, which he would not encourage; but when we consult the Scriptures, we find they are not few, but a great multitude which no man can number; how contrary soever this view of the subject may be to the ideas of bigots, who shut the gates of heaven against all but their own little party. If there was a blank made in the celestial society by the fall of the apostate angels, it will be filled up from the human race; the many mansions in our Father's house will be peopled, and the extent of his family will be proportioned to the invaluable price which was paid for its redemption.

Other points of difference might be mentioned; but passing them, I proceed to inquire what blessings believers enjoy in consequence of their adoption.

First, God sustains the relation of a Father to them: "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."‡ It will be thought, perhaps, that this is so obvious, that there was no necessity to mention it, as a father and son are correlative terms, and the one suggests the other. But what I mean to fix your attention upon, is not the title, but its import, and to remind you that, in consequence of this relation, God is to believers all that is implied in the character of a Father. He bears the most tender love to them; he watches over them with unwearied care; he attends to their interests, and they may repose entire confidence upon his wisdom and goodness. He is a Father who knows their wants, who is never mistaken in his judgment of what will be for their good, who is able to do every thing for them, who is always near to succour and protect them, and who will not abandon them even when provoked by their misconduct. The name of Father dispels every fear, and invites respectful familiarity. We feel ourselves emboldened to tell him our sorrows and desires; to apply to him for counsel, to flee to him as our refuge. If his greatness seems to forbid our approach, if his justice and purity are calculated to repress the fervour of our affection and the eagerness of our hopes, the recollection of the condescension and tenderness of a Father re-animates our hearts, and gives us a confidence to draw near to his throne. Who can tell us how great a privilege it is, to have the God of heaven and earth for a Father?

Secondly, The children of God receive the Spirit of adoption. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts."§ The purposes for which he is given, are various. The primary design is to inspire them with the temper, as they are now invested with the character, of sons. Human adoption had no effect of this kind. It changed the estate of the person adopted, by translating him from one family to another, and making a person, who was formerly a stranger, his father; but it produced no change

\* 1 John iii. 1.

† Luke xiii. 23.

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 18

§ Gal. iv. 6.



in his dispositions. Hence it might happen, and we presume that it did sometimes happen, that he who, misled by specious appearances, had adopted him, was disappointed in his expectations, and had reason to repent that he had admitted an unworthy member into his family. But all the members of the spiritual family are distinguished by the resemblance which they bear to their Father. They receive a new nature, as well as a new name. To express this change, they are represented in the Scriptures as begotten again, and born again, to signify that they receive a new spiritual being, and have new views, and feelings, and desires. They are transformed into the image of Christ, and therefore are made like their Father; for Christ is the express image of his person. This change is the work of the Spirit. If the water of baptism is the sign, the efficient cause is the Spirit, whose province it is to beautify the new, as well as the old, creation. But this is not the only office which he is appointed to perform. There is another of the utmost importance, which is indispensably necessary to their comfort, namely, to enable them to ascertain their relation to God, which is not self-evident, and the reality of which they could not establish without his assistance. Hence he is represented in the Scriptures as giving testimony to the fact. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."\* In what manner this testimony is given, has been the subject of dispute. It is not, we may venture to say, by a voice, or something equivalent to a voice, announcing to the man this proposition, 'Thou art a son of God;' or by unaccountable impressions on his mind; but in a way consonant to the Scriptures, and to the regular exercise of our faculties. The expression "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirits," imports that there is a double testimony, by our own hearts and by him. The one is not given without the other. Now, we may understand how the two witnesses concur, if we conceive the Holy Ghost to give testimony by enabling the saints to embrace the promises with a particular application to themselves, and to exercise distinctly the various Christian graces, so that their existence and genuineness shall be unquestionable. By this process they are assured of their sonship; for the fact is placed beyond doubt, when they perceive in themselves the certain marks of regeneration. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."† The Spirit bears testimony to the sonship of believers, when he brings to light, by his operations upon their souls, the evidences of their adoption; and thus makes their relation to God as manifest as if he assured them of it with an audible voice. Hence they are enabled to call God their Father; not with the presumption of hypocrites, and the indifference of formalists, but with the confidence of faith, and the ardour of filial affection. They call him Father, not only when his providence smiles upon them and even the sinner persuades himself of his love, but in the dark hour of trouble and sorrow; like our Saviour, who still claimed him in the endearing relation, even when he complained that he had forsaken him. In a word, the hope which sustains the heart of the Christian, the joy which arises within him, the secret refreshment which he experiences in devotional exercises, and the enlargement of his soul in prayer; these are the blessed fruits of the presence and agency of the Spirit of adoption.

Thirdly, Their heavenly Father provides for all their wants. To care for his children, to supply them, according to his ability, with such things as they need, to feed, and clothe, and educate them; these are duties which religion and natural affection prescribe to every parent. He who adopted a son, came under an engagement to act in every respect the part of a father. Certainly,

\* Rom. viii. 16.

† 1 John iii. 14, 19.

then, they who have been admitted into the family of God, may expect all blessings from his goodness, whether pertaining to this world or to the next. A controversy has been agitated, (and what point, great or little, trifling or important, has not been the subject of dispute?) Whether Christ purchased temporal benefits for believers? Those who adopt the negative side of the question, will allow that the blessing which accompanies them is owing to his mediation, and only contend, that the things themselves are not the fruits of his death. It is not easy to conceive what valuable purpose can be served by this discussion, except that it affords an opportunity of displaying nice discrimination in separating two things which common apprehension had blended together. It was not necessary to put us on our guard against ascribing too much to our Saviour, and to count and reckon with him, that we might ascertain the precise extent of our obligations; our grateful feelings towards him have not so strong a tendency to excess, as to stand in need of a check. When we consider that the faithfulness of God is expressly pledged for the temporal provision of his children; that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come; that our heavenly Father is represented as knowing that we have need of food and raiment, and therefore as bestowing them; and that our Saviour has taught his disciples to pray for their daily bread, and, consequently, to ask it in his name and for his sake, we seem to be authorized to rank common benefits among the blessings of the new covenant, and, consequently, to say, that we are indebted for them to the same price which was paid for the salvation of our souls.

As nothing on this obscure controversy has ever come under my notice, I know not exactly the grounds on which the purchase of temporal blessings is denied, but presume that it is because they are bestowed upon unbelievers as well as upon believers. This, however, is an argument of no force. The point at issue is, not whether there is any difference between those two classes in the receipt of these blessings, for it is acknowledged that there is none; but, whether there is any difference in respect of right. It is certain that wicked men have no more a right to temporal good things, than a condemned criminal has to the food by which he is sustained till the day of execution. Undoubtedly, he has no claim to it, as he is dead in law, and it is accorded to him solely for the purpose of prolonging his life, till the proper time arrive for subjecting him to the appointed punishment. But believers have a right to the benefits which they enjoy; "for all things," says an apostle, "are yours, whether things present, or things to come." They have a right to them, from the promise that their bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure. And how did they obtain this promise? For whose sake was it made to them? "In Christ are all the promises yea and amen, to the glory of God." It is through him that a distinction is made between them and other men, that they can look up to God for their daily bread, while others have no ground for any such expectation. In a word, their right to this world, or to an adequate portion of it, which is enumerated among the things which belong to them—"for the world is yours," says Paul—their right to this world is placed upon its proper basis by the apostle, when he says, "All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's;"\* thus referring temporal, as well as spiritual benefits to his mediation, as the cause for which they are communicated to the saints.

If any person should still think that Christ has procured for us, not the benefits themselves, but the blessing which attends them, he is at full liberty to indulge his opinion; but it may be questioned, whether it will contribute in any degree to his piety. "They that fear the Lord shall not lack any good

\* 1 Cor. iii. 21. 23.



thing." Riches may be denied to them, or may be taken from them, but food convenient may be confidently expected. The blessing of heaven is in their portion, however scanty it may be; and "a little which a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked." "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."\* With respect to the provision which he makes for the souls of his children, we are all agreed. As he gave manna to the Israelites in the wilderness, so he gives them his Word, to be the mean of communicating spiritual good things; and it is sometimes compared to milk, and sometimes to strong meat, to intimate that it is adapted to the diversified circumstances and states of the members of his family, to the babe in Christ, and to the full-grown man. His care of them is represented in a solemn and impressive manner in the Sacred Supper, when they are assembled at his table to eat bread and drink wine, as the symbols of heavenly blessings, and all are reminded that he nourishes their souls by his invisible grace. The design of all his institutions is, that they may come, "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."†

In the fourth place, The children of God are subjected to paternal discipline. When we judge according to our feelings, this may seem to be a punishment rather than a privilege, for "no chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous." But as in a human family, he that spares the rod hates his son, because, through mistaken tenderness, he suffers him to escape with impunity when he has committed a fault, and thus permits his wayward inclinations to gather strength, and vicious habits to be formed which will entail misery upon him here and hereafter; so, in the family of God, the want of discipline would be an evidence, not of love, but of neglect and indifference to the interests of the members. The Scripture therefore says, "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."‡ He chastises him because he loves him; and, however paradoxical this may appear upon a superficial view, its truth will be manifest to those who consider the end proposed and the effect produced. God chastises his children, that they may be partakers of his holiness; and holiness is not only the dress and ornament of the members of his family, but is indispensably necessary to their peace and happiness, both in this world and in the next. Men may think, and even the saints themselves may suspect, when their trials are manifold and severe, that their heavenly Father has disowned and forsaken them. But this is not the only instance in which human reason egregiously errs. What seems to our hasty and limited observation to betoken ill, is the surest proof of his favour; and a state of uninterrupted ease and enjoyment, which we would prefer, would furnish a more solid ground of apprehension. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."§

Lastly, God will bestow upon his children an eternal inheritance. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."|| Children, by the law of nature and nations, inherit the property of their father; and an adopted son possessed all the rights and privileges of a son by descent. At the death of the person who adopted him, he was legally entitled to his property. There is an inheritance which belongs to the family of God, and every man who is received into it is an heir. The expression, "joint heirs with Christ," imports that the inheritance originally pertains to our Redeemer, who obtained it for himself and those whom he calls his brethren by his meritorious obedience.

\* Ps. xxxvii. 16. 3.

‡ Heb. xii. 7, 8.

† Eph. iv. 13.

|| Rom. viii. 17.

† Heb. xii. 6.

and that their right to it is founded on their connexion with him. It is an inheritance of glory and felicity, "incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" for them. Whatever God now is to angels and glorified saints, and whatever he will be to them through an endless duration, in which their faculties will be continually expanding, and they will be filled with bliss to the utmost extent of their capacity;—for all this, "which eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the mind of man to conceive," the adopted sons of God are authorized to hope. Even in this world, how happy does the earnest of the inheritance make them! How divine the peace which sheds its influence upon their souls! How pure and elevating the joy which, in some select hours, springs up in their bosoms! How are they raised above the pains and the pleasures of life, while, in the contemplations of faith, they anticipate their future abode in the higher regions of the universe! But these are only an earnest. Their hearts beat high with the expectation of something too sublime to be uttered or adequately conceived; and, while their breasts heave with the vehemence of desire, they breathe out, in broken and impassioned accents, their longings for the time when they shall be delivered from the infirmities of the flesh and the imperfections of the present state, which prevent the full enjoyment of infinite good. "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now: and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."\*

## LECTURE LXXIV.

### ON SANCTIFICATION.

Scriptural meaning of the term, Sanctification—Difference between Justification and Sanctification—Sanctification viewed as a Privilege, and as a Duty—Implies the Mortification of Sin, and the Increase of Positive Holiness—Extent of Holiness attainable in this Life.

THE blessing which in the next place claims our attention, is Sanctification. But before I proceed to explain its nature, it is necessary to ascertain the Scriptural meaning of the term.

The word, to sanctify, bears a variety of senses which are considerably different. It sometimes signifies to separate a person or thing from its common use to some particular purpose, even when there is no reference to religion. Thus, in the seventh verse of the twenty-second chapter of Jeremiah, God says, in our translation, "I will prepare," but according to the original, "I will sanctify destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons; and they shall cut down the choice cedars, and cast them into the fire." Again, to sanctify, often signifies to separate from a common to a sacred use, or to dedicate to the service of God. In this sense, the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry were holy; the priests and Levites were holy; the temple erected on Mount Zion was holy; and Jerusalem was called the holy city.

\* Rom. viii. 22. 25.



Considered in themselves, these persons and things had no more sanctity than other persons and things; their holiness was merely relative, and arose from their consecration to religious uses. God sanctified our Saviour when he set him apart to the mediatorial office, and sent him into the world to execute it; and Christ sanctified himself when he assumed that office, and devoted himself to the performance of its duties. It is worthy of observation, with respect to the words καθαρίζειν and ἁγιάζειν, which signify *to cleanse* and *to purify*, that, when used to express the effect of the sacrifice of Christ upon his people, they do not denote internal purification, but dedication to God: "Jesus, that he might sanctify—ἵνα ἁγιάσῃ—the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."\* Now, the effect of blood shed as an atonement for sin is, not to cleanse us from pollution, but to free us from guilt, and to restore us to the favour of God: "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean,—ἁγιάζει—sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?"† The effect of the legal sacrifices is compared to that of the death of Christ. The effect of the legal sacrifices was to absolve the offerer from the guilt of his sins, so far that he escaped the temporal penalty which he had incurred, and was admitted into the sanctuary. This is called "sanctifying to the purifying of the flesh." The effect of the death of Christ is to purify the conscience, to obtain for us full pardon, and thus to give us boldness to enter into the holiest of all. There are several other senses of the word, to sanctify. We sanctify the Sabbath when we regard it as more sacred than other days, and perform its appropriate duties. We sanctify the Lord our God, when we treat him with that reverence which is due to him on account of the transcendent excellence of his nature, by which he is distinguished or separated from all other beings. And God sanctifies himself when he manifests his glory. This discussion will not appear unnecessary to any of you who wish to acquire an accurate knowledge of the language of Scripture; and I conclude with remarking, that the idea of separation is implied in all these uses of the term.

I proceed to the last sense of the word, in which it is to be at present understood. When we say, that those who are justified by faith, are also sanctified, our meaning is, that they are made holy, not merely by consecration to the service of God, but by the infusion of his grace, which purifies them from the pollution of sin, and renews them in the whole man after his image. It is plain, from the following passage itself, as well as from the connection in which it is introduced, that, in this sense, the word to sanctify is used. It is a prayer of the apostle, subjoined to an exhortation to abstain from all appearance of evil: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."‡ When the same apostle says, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication,"§ he evidently refers to purity of heart and conduct. It is unnecessary to multiply quotations, as it is acknowledged by all, that there is an internal holiness by which true Christians are characterized, and that the regularity of the life does not alone answer the demands of religion: "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy, in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."||

As justification and sanctification are blessings inseparably connected, it will assist us in forming correct ideas of both, to mark carefully the points in which

\* Heb. xiii. 12.

† Heb. ix. 13, 14.

‡ 1 Thess. v. 23.

§ 1 Thess. iv. 3.

|| 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

they differ. They differ in their order: justification precedes, and sanctification follows; a sinner is pardoned and restored to the favour of God, before the Spirit is given to renew him more and more after his image. They differ in their object: justification takes away the guilt of sin, or the obligation to punishment; sanctification cleanses us from its stain or pollution. They differ in their form: justification is a judicial act, by which the sinner is pronounced righteous; sanctification is a physical or moral act, or rather a series of such acts, by which a change is effected in the qualities of the soul. The one, therefore, is called an act, to signify that it is perfected at once; the other is called a work, to signify that it is progressive. Justification being an act passed in a moment, is equal in all believers; sanctification exists in different degrees of advancement in different individuals. In a word, the one changes our state, translating us from a state of condemnation into a state of acceptance; the other changes our nature, or makes those holy who were unholy. I shall add only one difference more, which relates to their matter. In justification, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us; in sanctification, an inherent righteousness is communicated; and upon the whole it appears, that in justification we receive a title to heaven, and by sanctification we are prepared for it, or "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."\*

It is worthy of notice, that, in the well known enumeration of the privileges of Christians, when Paul represents the series as a chain stretching from eternity, sanctification is not specified as one of the links. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."† We account for the omission by supposing, either that the apostle intended only to state the process according to which a right to eternal life, and the consequent enjoyment of it, are obtained, (and the right depends solely upon justification, which ensues upon the faith wrought in the heart when the sinner is effectually called;) or that sanctification is virtually included in the privileges which are explicitly stated. It is implied in effectual calling, in which the soul undergoes a spiritual change, or is regenerated, and the foundation is laid of its future progress in holiness; or it is implied in glorification, which will consist in the perfect state of the soul as well as of the body, and may be said to be begun in the present life, because so far as the soul is conformed to the image of God it is already glorified, and hence believers are said to be "changed," even in this world, "into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."‡

The difference between sanctification and regeneration is not a difference in nature and kind, like the difference between it and justification. They are, if I may speak so, parts of one whole. In regeneration there is an infusion of spiritual life into the soul, in which life all the graces or all the holy tempers of the Christian are virtually included. In sanctification those graces are unfolded and matured, and exert their native influence upon the conduct. In regeneration the living seed is sown, and begins to germinate and show itself above ground: in sanctification it grows up, and yields fruit, according to the parable in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some a hundred fold. In regeneration the new creature is formed, but although no member or feature is wanting, they are diminutive and feeble, and it is yet but a babe: in sanctification the body grows in all its parts, acquires vigour and activity, and advances towards the full stature of a perfect man in Christ. In short, it is the same work which is carried on in regeneration and sanctification, according to the words of an apostle, "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."§

Sanctification may be considered as a privilege, and as a duty. In the one

\* Col. i. 12.

† Rom. viii. 30.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

§ Phil. i. 6.



view it is the work of God, and in the other it is the work of man, assisted by supernatural grace. As a privilege it is the subject of promise and of prayer. It is promised in the following words, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."\* It was the subject of our Lord's intercessory prayer for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth;"† and it should be the subject of the prayers of Christians for themselves. "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law."‡ We may afterwards have an opportunity to speak of sanctification as a privilege, when we come to consider its advantages; and I shall only observe, that as it is indispensably necessary to our admission into the immediate presence of God, so it is the source of great happiness upon earth. The foundation of a Christian's peace is the atonement and intercession of the Saviour, in whom God is reconciled; but there is a peace which flows from holiness, and is the natural effect of the cessation of the tumultuary motions of sin, and of the influence of the mild virtues which religion inspires. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them."§ I may add, that it is the high privilege of a creature to be conformed to the image of his Maker. As He is the first and most excellent of all beings, they stand highest in the scale who bear the nearest resemblance to him. If holiness is the glory of God, it is also the glory of man.

Sanctification, considered as a duty, is our work. In this light it is represented in the Scriptures, when we are called to "be holy," to "make" to ourselves "a new heart," and to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."|| But as I remarked before, in this work man is assisted by grace; for we can do nothing of ourselves, and it is God "who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is called the work of man, not as if he could change his heart, or when the change is effected could carry it forward to perfection, but as he diligently uses the means, trusting in the divine blessing which renders them effectual.

Although in regeneration holy principles are infused into the soul, yet the change produced is only partial. No Christian grace is wanting in the regenerated man, and no sin or sinful inclination retains sovereign power; but the graces are imperfect, and remaining depravity continues to operate, and sometimes prevails. The truth of this statement is manifest from the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, in which we find that in Paul, who is a specimen of other believers, there were two principles, the one of sin and the other of holiness, between which there was a perpetual conflict; and the victory was sometimes on the one side, and sometimes on the other. Two things, therefore, are implied in sanctification, the mortification of sin, and the increase of positive holiness. These are not so distinct that they can go on at different times, for the one necessarily accompanies the other; but in explaining the nature of sanctification, they require to be separately illustrated.

The mortification of sin does not consist solely in abstinence from outward transgressions in which we had previously indulged, but have abandoned by an effort upon ourselves. Of such an effort, any man is capable by his natural powers, and without the influence of any moral consideration, when he is excited solely by a regard to reputation, to health, and to his secular interests. External purity, as our Lord has shown by the example of the Pharisees, may

\* Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

§ Ps. cxix. 165.

† John xvii. 17.

|| 1 Pet. i. 15. Ezek. xviii. 31. 2 Cor. vii. 1.

‡ Ps. cxix. 34, &c.

exist, while the heart is foul with the deepest stains of pollution. Nor should it be supposed, that the mortification of sin has taken place, because some sinful inclination which formerly predominated is weakened, or perhaps has disappeared, if other inclinations survive, or if in the room of that which has ceased a new disposition has sprung up, different in form but in its general nature equally criminal. A man who was once a profligate is become sober; but then he is now slavishly devoted to the world, and his heart which was debased by sensuality, is narrowed and hardened by avarice; or it may be that, although no new vice should show itself in his character, he is puffed up with pride, and glories in his virtue. In these and similar cases, sin retains its original strength, but works in a more concealed manner, or accomplishes its purpose in a different way. The mortification of the body has been often mistaken for the mortification of sin. Men who have withdrawn from society and retired into deserts, and there submitted to the most painful privations, and performed with determined perseverance a tedious round of religious duties, have imagined that they had attained a degree of sanctity, to which no man could pretend, who was living amidst the commerce of the world. They did not consider, that in their solitudes where they were not exposed to external temptations, sinful propensities which were supposed to be eradicated, might have only lain dormant for want of excitement, and might have revived if they had been brought back to society, like the weeds which disappear in winter, but show themselves again at the return of spring. I would by no means affirm, that such men were all hypocrites, or that they were all deceived, for from the little that I know of their history and their writings, I believe that some of them were truly pious; but I have no doubt that many of them, if they had told the truth, would have confessed that they often cast a longing look towards the world which they had forsaken, like Jerome, who honestly acknowledged, that during his seclusion in Palestine, his thoughts frequently wandered after the pleasures of Rome.

The mortification of sin is founded in hatred of it, and not simply in fear of its consequences. It is connected with the love of God, who holds sin in abhorrence, and whose will it is that we should purify ourselves from it. It aims at subduing and extirpating not only those sins which are particularly odious, on account of their grossness and their contrariety to the general sentiments and feelings of mankind, but every known sin, however venial the world may esteem it; and if there is any sin about a believer of which he is not aware, it also is included, in this sense, that he will be content with nothing less than universal purification, and is earnestly desirous that not a single stain should be left. It is carried on not in his own strength, but by the means which God has appointed, and the assistance which he graciously affords; by faith, and prayer, and watchfulness, and determined resistance. It is not the work of a day, but of life. Sin is like a man who has received a wound which has enfeebled him, but has not entirely deprived him of strength. He is not dead but dying; he is still capable of action, and even of vigorous efforts; and his antagonist must therefore be upon his guard, and watch for an opportunity to inflict new wounds which will terminate the struggle. "Mortify your members which are upon the earth."\* In consequence of the interest which the believer has obtained in the death of Christ, the power of sin is broken, and it will be reduced more and more, by the grace which God is ready to communicate, if he humbly ask and diligently improve it. In this way only can he hope for success; and, accordingly, Paul concludes the account of his internal conflict with thanksgiving to God, who had enabled him to resist and in some degree to overcome. "I thank God," he says, "through Jesus Christ our

\* Col. iii. 5.



Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, and with the flesh the law of sin;”\* intimating that, although depravity still lurked in him and made efforts to regain the mastery, yet it existed only in the lower part of his nature, and the superior principles, the understanding, the conscience, and the will, were elevated to the service of God.

The mortification of sin does not imply its utter extirpation, but the reduction of its influence within narrower limits; for however earnestly a Christian may wish that it should cease to exist in his soul, complete exemption from it, as we shall afterwards see, is unattainable in the present state. It is mortified when his views of its vileness are clearer and more affecting, and, consequently, his hatred of it is more intense; when he becomes more quick in detecting it under its most specious forms, as well as more active in searching it out; when he is excited to more frequent and fervent prayer for deliverance from it; when, from increased aversion, he is more vigilant in observing its motions, and using precautions against its attacks; when its efforts become less frequent and more faint, like those of a man who is languishing under his wounds; when he is more deeply humbled for the remains of it which he still perceives; and when for having consented to it on any occasion, he feels more profound grief, and is more speedily recovered by repentance. When David was guilty of a great transgression in the affair of Bathsheba, he gave a melancholy proof that the power of depravity was strong within him; but we cannot doubt that this event ultimately contributed to weaken its interests, when we reflect upon his bitter repentance, his humiliating confessions, and his earnest supplications.

Thus, by the grace of God, the Christian dies to sin, and sin dies in him; or, in other words, he hates it more, and its influence over him is diminished. ‘He lays aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset him.’ The natural consequence is, that his conduct is purer, is more free from acts of sin, as the fruit falls off from a tree when the root is destroyed or injured.

Let us proceed to the second division of the subject, namely, the increase of positive holiness. This our Church expresses by “living unto righteousness,” and the Scripture, by “having our fruit unto holiness.” In proportion as the power of sin is circumscribed, there is more ample space for the Christian graces to grow and flourish. The vigour of the new man will advance, as that of the old man declines. Let us consider the progress of sanctification, in relation to the different powers of the soul.

First, The understanding is more and more illuminated by the word and Spirit of truth. The first illumination takes place in regeneration, when the blind eyes of the sinner are opened, and he who, while he was a natural man, could not receive the things of the Spirit of God, having become a spiritual man, is enabled to discern them. But there is much room for improvement; and hence, we find an apostle praying in behalf even of those who were savingly acquainted with the Gospel, that “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give to them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened.”† Their apprehensions of divine things become more distinct, and steady, and comprehensive, and affecting. Their views are enlarged of God, of Christ, of themselves, of their duty, of sin, of the world, of future and invisible things. As knowledge was communicated to the mind of man in his creation, the restoration of it is necessary that he may be renewed after the image of his Maker. I do not mean speculative knowledge, of which depraved men and infernal spirits are possessed; but knowledge accompanied with suitable affections towards the things unknown. As natural light not only renders objects visible,

\* Rom. vii. 25.

† Eph. i. 17, 18.

but beautifies the face of nature with a variety of colours, so the knowledge communicated to the people of God does not merely expand and improve the intellect, but gives a new moral aspect to the whole soul. And the necessity of supernatural illumination will be manifest, if we reflect that the understanding is the leading faculty, which not only, if I may speak so, points out the path to be pursued by the other powers of the soul, but excites them by the attractive and interesting views which it presents. Complete ignorance would be followed by a death-like torpor of the soul, and man would remain in a state of inaction, except so far as he was stimulated by his bodily appetites. Knowledge awakens his dormant faculties. It exhibits objects of love and fear, of hope and aversion, and gives rise to active exertions, with a view to obtain what is good, and to avoid what is evil. As God begins, so he carries on to perfection, the work of the new creation, by the communication of light. "The new man is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him who created him."\*

Secondly, In sanctification the will of the believer is rendered more and more conformable to the will of God. In this the essence of holiness consists. As Cicero says, that to have the same desires and aversions, is the consummation of friendship; so we may say, that to be like minded with God, to be entirely resigned to him, to choose what he chooses, and to refuse what he refuses, is the highest moral perfection of a creature. Absolute conformity to the will of God is not attainable in this world, and exists only in heaven, where his will is so done by its blessed inhabitants, that they are proposed as a pattern to us. But it is the effect of regenerating grace to subdue our rebellious hearts, and to bring them under subjection to the authority of our Maker. This is their predominant state; but it is often disturbed by the wayward movements of the will; and it is the design of the Holy Spirit, in his operations upon it, to correct and restrain its aberrations, and to reduce it to a state of habitual submission. The object proposed is, to establish a complete moral dependence upon God; and, with this view, to make the subjects of his influence cease more and more from their own views, and desires, and pursuits. Without pretending to explain what power the Holy Ghost secretly exerts upon the soul, we may say that the effect is produced by means of the light that he gives to the mind; in which, the will of God appears not only supreme and sacred, but so just, and wise, and good, that nothing is more consonant to the dictates of reason, as well as to the commands of religion, than that we should acquiesce in it without reserve and without a murmur. Thus are the people of God led to submission, not only when his will is enforced and recommended by the nature of the duty which it enjoins; but when, naked and unsupported, it demands our obedience, solely because it is his will. In this abstract form it was exhibited to Adam, when the injunction was given to him, to abstain from the fruit of a particular tree in the garden, there being no reason for abstinence but the simple prohibition. It appears equally absolute still in many of the dispensations of Providence, of which no other account can be given, than that such is the decree of heaven; and it is a proof of no inconsiderable progress in holiness, when the person who is tried in this manner, bows to his sovereign Lord, and says, 'God is his will.' Job is an example, whose submission amidst the greatest afflictions, was expressed in these remarkable words: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."† When a Christian finds that he is less disposed to consult with flesh and blood, and more to consult the Scriptures; that he is sincerely desirous to know what is his duty, and more diligent than before to ascertain it; that every intimation of the Divine pleasure commands his atten-

\* Col. iii. 10.

† Job i. 21.



tion, and inspires him with holy reverence; that he is more ready, and cheerful, and determined in obedience; and that his supreme desire is to glorify God and to be accepted of him: when this is the prevailing state of his mind, it is evident that God has made him willing in a day of power, and that the work of sanctification is advancing in his soul towards perfection.

Thirdly, In sanctification, all the holy principles or habits, as they are sometimes called, of believers are strengthened. If the affections are considered as modifications of the will, they are purified in proportion to its conformity to the standard of rectitude. The love and hatred, the fear and hope of the believer, will be excited by proper objects, and be regulated with respect to their degree. While the soul is thus affected by proper objects, the lower appetites will be restrained and subjugated, and, although not eradicated, as they are essential principles of our nature, will be directed and retained within due bounds by the light of the understanding and the authority of conscience. The change effected by sanctifying grace may be ascertained by the different feelings with which external things are now regarded. Once, they alone were deemed to be important, but now they are considered as insignificant, or, at least, as subordinate; once, they stirred up strong and impetuous desire, but now they awaken comparatively faint emotions; once, under their influence, the soul was degraded and brutified, as if it had lost its nature and were merely the principle of animal life and feeling; but now they are counteracted by the spirituality of the mind, which, surrounded with earthly things, soars aloft and holds high intercourse with heaven: "By the cross of Christ," says Paul, "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."\* In proportion to the increasing vigour of holy habits, the moral connexion of the soul with this world will be dissolved, and the impression diminished which the latter was accustomed to make. The illumination of the mind has a powerful effect upon our active powers. Faith is strengthened by clear apprehensions of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Love grows warmer, as the love of God is more steadily contemplated and more sensibly felt. Hope brightens at the glorious prospect of life and immortality which the Gospel displays. Repentance melts into more copious tears, while it looks at the cross, where the vileness of sin is exhibited with an evidence which the heart feels, but words cannot express. All the graces grow under the influence of the truth, which first gave them birth, and now rears them up to manhood. When the Christian "is adding to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity," he is "neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."† The work of sanctification is not only begun, but is going on to perfection. If we inquire how far the work of sanctification extends, we answer, in the language of our church, that it extends to "the whole man."‡ The apostle Paul says that God sanctifies his people "wholly in soul, body, and spirit."§ Man is a compound being, and, according to the opinion of the moderns, learned and unlearned, consists of two parts, a body and a soul. But a different system was held by the ancients, who called man—*τριμερὴς ἰπποκράτης*—a *three-fold person or substance*; affirming that, besides the body, there were two internal principles, the soul and the spirit, or, as it was sometimes called, the mind. The soul—*ψυχή*—they defined to be the principle of life, or that which distinguishes animate from inanimate things, and they considered it as in itself irrational, as the seat of the appetites and passions, as affected by the body, and as the medium by which the body affects the spirit. The spirit, *το πνεῦμα*, or *ὁ νους*, the mind, was rational, and acted with reason; and it was its office to contend

\* Gal. vi. 14.

† 2 Pet. i. 5—8.

‡ Conf. xiii. 2.

§ 1 Thess. v. 23.

with the body, and to regulate the movements of the inferior principle. It would be foreign to our purpose to inquire whether this, or the modern theory of human nature, is true. The question is not decided by the words of the apostle; for, as it was not his business to teach philosophy but theology, he might adopt, without intending to give his sanction to a particular system, language familiar to those whom he addressed, and, at the same time, well fitted to convey the information which he meant to communicate. He explains his meaning by the word ὁλοτελής, which is translated "wholly," and subjoins the words soul, body, and spirit, to signify, in the style of the age, that the work of sanctification is universal, or that every part of human nature is the subject of it; the soul in all its faculties, understanding, will, and affections or passions, and also the body. Strictly, indeed, the body is not the subject of sanctification, because, being a material substance, it is susceptible neither of virtue nor of vice; but it is sanctified in this sense, that it is dedicated to the service of God; and its organs and members, which were formerly employed in sinful actions, and were excitements to them, are converted into the instruments of righteousness. It is called in Scripture, "the temple of the Holy Ghost."\*

But while sanctification extends to our whole nature, and leaves no part of it unrenewed, we must not imagine the work to be so complete, as to restore us to a state of perfect purity. There have been men, and there still are, who maintain that sinless perfection is attainable in the present life. This was the doctrine of the founder of the Methodists, and I presume it is still held by his followers. It is acknowledged that the Scriptures call upon us to aim at perfection, and speak of some individuals in such a manner as may lead superficial readers to conclude that they had fully succeeded. They call upon us to "behold the perfect man," and give this as the character of certain individuals. But, one part of Scripture should be explained in consistency with another; and it is contrary to the laws of legitimate interpretation, to wrest a particular expression to a sense at variance with the known and avowed sentiments of the author. If we take this rule along with us, we shall immediately perceive that, in the cases before us, perfection can mean nothing more than integrity or sincerity. He is perfect who unfeignedly loves God, and has a respect to all his commands.

That the most eminent saints mentioned in Scripture, even some of those to whom the epithet, perfect, is applied, were not free from sin, is evident from the defects and blemishes which are discovered in their conduct. The praise of high attainments will undoubtedly be conceded to the apostle of the Gentiles, and it is not easy to conceive upon what principle any man could persuade himself that he or others have excelled him; but, as he expressly disclaims any pretension to perfection, so the relation which he has given of his experience, demonstrates that he uses, on this occasion, the language not only of humility but of truth. "I see," he says, "a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."† Not to confine our attention to a particular case, let us recollect the words of the wise man, "There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."‡ And observe in what strong terms an apostle rejects the doctrine of sinless perfection, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."§ It is a doctrine, you see, which will be maintained only by ignorant presumption. Were any person truly perfect, he would not stand in need of those institutions or means of grace, which God has provided for the perfecting of the saints. In particular, daily prayer for the forgiveness of sin would not be his duty; he would

\* 1 Cor. vi. 19.

† Rom. vii. 23.

‡ Eccl. vii. 20.

§ 1 John i. 8.



enjoy uninterrupted communion with God; would not be subject to discipline, which presupposes errors and failings; and, having spent a life undisturbed by pain and sorrow, would be translated, we may presume, into a better world without suffering death.

The possibility of perfection in the present state, could be conceived only by men who were ignorant of Scripture and of themselves. They must have first lowered the standard of holiness. They must have narrowed and abated the demands of the divine law, to meet their fancied attainments. It is impossible that any person in his senses, could suppose himself capable of performing that high obedience which the law, uncorrupted by human interpretation, evidently requires. We might justly call in question the veracity, or the understanding, of the man who should seriously assure us that he loved God with all his strength, and soul, and mind, and heart, and loved his neighbour as himself. At any rate, we may call in question his Christianity; for his sentiments are as contrary to those of a genuine believer, as darkness is to light. The latter is distinguished by a humble estimate of himself. He acknowledges that he fails more or less in every duty, that he is daily guilty of sin, that he could not stand if God should enter into judgment with him, and that he has no hope of acceptance but through the mediation of Christ. As these acknowledgments are dictated by his feelings, so they are in exact accordance with the Scriptures. The perfectionist belongs to a different class; and his arrogance and self-confidence manifests that, while he boasts of occupying the first form, he is a mere tyro in the school of Christ, and has need that some one should teach him what are the first principles of the oracles of God.

## LECTURE LXXV.

### ON SANCTIFICATION.

**Sanctification the Work of the Three Persons of the Godhead—Their Several Offices—Nature and Effect of the Spirit's Operations on the Souls of Believers in Sanctification—Christ, the Pattern of Sanctification—Rule of Sanctification, the Word—External Means of Sanctification—Faith as a Means of Sanctification.**

HAVING in the preceding lecture explained the nature of Sanctification, I proceed to take notice of several particulars, the consideration of which is necessary to give us a complete view of the subject.

I shall speak, in the first place, of the Author of sanctification; and here we shall see that, like other divine works, it is ascribed to all the Persons of the Trinity. I would remark, in general, that there is no inaccuracy or confusion in attributing the same work sometimes to one Person and sometimes to another; because, although the Persons are distinct, the Essence is one and indivisible; and because the same work is said to be performed by one, in one view, and by another, in another. In relation to the present case, all the Persons in the Godhead are concerned in the sanctification of the soul; but a different office is assigned to each.

First, This work is ascribed to the Father in those passages in which prayer is offered up to him, that he would sanctify us, and make us perfect in every good work, and in which he promises to circumcise our hearts to love and

fear him, and to give us a new heart and a right spirit.\* In the economy of redemption, he is exhibited as the fountain of grace. All spiritual blessings are his gifts; they originate in his goodness, and are bestowed according to his will. To this blessing he predestinated his people before the foundation of the world; and he appointed and prepared the means by which it was attained and is actually communicated. As "this is the will of God, even our sanctification," so it is by his power, (exerted in the manner which will be afterwards pointed out, when we come to speak of the agency of the Spirit,) that the renovation of the soul after his image is begun, and advanced, and perfected.

Secondly, The work is ascribed to Jesus Christ, "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."† He is the Author of this work, as he has obtained for us the privilege of sanctification, by his obedience unto death. This may be explained in two ways. First, He has done that, in consideration of which God bestows so great a blessing upon us. In ourselves, we were unquestionably unworthy of it; and in creatures guilty and polluted, there was nothing to induce God to restore his image, which they had impiously defaced. As the whole obedience of our Saviour was performed not for himself but for us, and as it was meritorious in the highest degree, not simply because it was perfect, but because he was a person of infinite dignity, his righteousness is to be considered as the procuring cause of those supernatural influences by which we regain that holiness in which man was created, and which was the chief glory of his nature. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." He "loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish."‡ Secondly, Jesus Christ has removed the curse, which retained men under the dominion of sin by keeping them at a distance from God; and has brought them into a state in which they may receive those influences by which the purification of their nature will be effected. That you may understand this point, let me remind you that the guilt of sin, or the curse of the law, which is founded upon it, is a mighty and insurmountable obstacle in the way of any gracious communication from God to the sinner. Hence the law is said to be "the strength of sin."§ It is its strength, as it protects it, if I may speak so, against any power which could overthrow or weaken its dominion, and leaves it at full liberty to exert itself in enslaving more and more its unhappy subjects. While men remain in this state, all the arguments which are employed to convince their understandings, to awaken their consciences, and to interest their affections, and all the dispensations of Providence, whether calculated to alarm or to allure, have no permanent effect. The divine blessing, without which Paul plants and Apollos waters in vain, does not accompany them. By the removal of guilt, a channel is opened in which the grace of God flows into the soul; and thus you perceive the connexion between the death of Christ and our sanctification. "Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."|| The sanctification which was the immediate design of his death, is not moral but legal sanctification; and it signifies, I apprehend, in this place, our dedication to the service of God by the removal of the guilt of sin, which was the great impediment to our acceptance; but moral sanctification is the certain consequence. "Our old man," says the same apostle, in another Epistle, "is crucified with Christ,

\* 1 Thess. v. 23. Heb. xiii. 21. Deut. xxx. 6. Ezek. xxxvi. 26, &c. † Tit. ii. 14.

‡ John xvii. 19. Eph. v. 25—27.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 56.

|| Heb. xiii. 12.



that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”\* The language is highly figurative, but is not difficult to be understood. Our old man is our corrupt nature; and it is said to be crucified with Christ, to signify that, in virtue of his death upon the cross, the power of sin is broken. The proper effect of an atonement is not purification from the pollution of sin, but deliverance from guilt; but the former is ascribed to the sacrifice of Christ as well as the latter, because it brings us under the operation of grace, because it consecrates us to God, who gives the Holy Spirit to qualify us for his service. This remark is necessary to enable you to understand several passages of Scripture which speak of this subject, and to prevent you from misapprehending the language of Theologians, who sometimes express themselves in such a manner as might lead you to think, that the death of Christ is not only the meritorious, but the efficient cause of sanctification. This impression is made, when we are told that we are sanctified “by receiving the atonement into our hearts,” and by “having the blood of Christ conveyed into our hearts;” and even when such Scriptural expressions as have been quoted are used without explanation. The language of Scripture, with respect to the effect of the death of Christ, was better understood in the apostolic age than it is now, because sacrifices were then offered by both Jews and Gentiles, and every person knew their design, and the efficacy which they were supposed to exert. The language of Scripture is always proper and emphatic; but when metaphors occur, if we wish to convey distinct ideas into the minds of others, we must give the literal sense; and, if there is any danger of mistake, we should guard against it by the use of plain and appropriate terms. He who contents himself with telling us that we are sanctified by the death of Christ, or by the sprinkling of his blood, explains nothing; and, by dealing much in such phraseology, is apt to mislead.

In the third place, This work is ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Hence we read of the renovation and sanctification of the Spirit,† and our walking in God’s statutes is said to be the effect of the inhabitation of the Spirit in our hearts. The grace by which we are sanctified, proceeds from the Father by the Son, and is applied by the Spirit. Thus all the Persons of the Trinity are concerned in our restoration. The part which each acts is important and necessary, and the office of the third Person is not less glorious than that of the second. Our attention is peculiarly directed to our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is right that it should be so, for he appears with great prominence in the scheme of our salvation, and offered the atonement by which all the divine perfections were glorified in the highest, and the everlasting covenant was confirmed. But without the co-operation of the Spirit, his labours and sufferings would have been in vain. In a state of moral insensibility, with blinded minds and unfeeling consciences, men would have made no use of the atonement for their reconciliation to God, and continuing in the pollution of sin, which renders them loathsome in his sight, they must have been excluded from his presence, and the blessedness of communion with him. Christ purchased redemption, but the Spirit applies it. The work of Christ was accomplished by his humiliation, and sorrows, and death; it, as it were, strikes our senses, and on this account makes a more powerful impression. But if we attentively consider the work of the Spirit, we shall perceive that it also displays grace, and love, and power, worthy of the highest admiration. To enter into a human soul foul with the deepest stains, in which every thing revolting to the holiness of his nature is exhibited, and to exert his influence there to purify it, and render it capable of the refined and exalted joys of religion, is a proof of condescension and benevolence surpassing conception. He meets with resistance,

\* Rom. vi. 6.

† 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Peter i. 2. Tit. iii. 5, &amp;c.

but he does not retire ; the resistance is strong, all the power of corrupt nature being called forth to oppose his design ; but he subdues it by the same Almighty energy which reduced the elemental chaos into order. In his plastic hands, man, an outcast from his Maker, so vile as to be the object of abhorrence, and so helpless as to be given over as irrecoverably lost, is transformed into a being adorned with the similitude of his Creator, devoted to his service, and destined to live in the happy seats of the spirits of light. Let us remember that we are under infinite obligations to our Sanctifier, as well as our Redeemer ; and let his love be the subject of our devout meditations, and awaken our grateful praises.

That the sanctification of the soul is the work of the Spirit we certainly know ; but the manner in which it is effected, we are not able to explain. We know also that all things were created by God, but cannot tell how he created them ; that in him we live and move and have our being, but are ignorant of the mode in which his power is exerted to sustain us. Our Lord signifies that there is something mysterious in this matter. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."\* Means are employed, but their efficacy depends solely upon him. It is his power which begins and carries on the change that takes place in the sentiments and affections of the soul. We cannot call it merely a moral power, consisting in the presentation of arguments and motives to the mind, because upon this supposition, it would differ in no respect from the means themselves, or from the part which one man may act in persuading and exciting another to the love and practice of virtue. If we call it a physical power, we must mean that the soul is endowed with new faculties of perception and feeling, or that its natural faculties are rendered capable of certain acts, for which they were previously unfit. The truth is, although this term has been sometimes applied to the power exerted in regeneration and sanctification, we cannot affix any distinct idea to it ; and it is questionable whether those who use it, can explain what they mean to their own satisfaction or that of others. It would seem therefore to be the wisest and most modest plan, instead of attempting to describe the nature of this power, and the mode of exercising it, to content ourselves with the general knowledge of the fact, that it is owing to the operation of the Divine Spirit upon the soul—that it is sanctified.

A question has been agitated among divines, whether there is a formation of holy habits in the soul, or sanctification consists solely in the influence of the word upon its several faculties, upon the conscience, will, and affections, through the medium of the understanding. The controversy is somewhat obscure, and perhaps the parties have, occasionally at least, contended in the dark, and they were not always distinguished by metaphysical acumen. The point at issue seems to be, whether there is a real change effected in the soul itself, or it is only morally acted upon by the word of God, coming in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. Habit commonly signifies a disposition to act, or a power of acting acquired by previous acts. In the present case it signifies merely the disposition or power without a reference to previous acts, as it is acknowledged that the power or disposition is not the effect of our prior efforts, but of a divine operation. But if this is a just definition of habit, it must also be acknowledged that gracious habits are infused into the soul ; for in saying so, we mean nothing more than that the subject of sanctification possesses certain dispositions, or inclinations, to act according to the rule laid down in the Scriptures. We may not be able to understand what constitutes a disposition or habit of the mind, but the fact is certain that there are habits,

\* John iii. 8.



intellectual and moral; and there is no more difficulty in conceiving them to be formed by supernatural than by natural means. The great objection to the denial of habits, and the attribution of the holiness of Christians exclusively to the influence of the word, is that it represents them as not permanently but transiently holy, as having no indelible character impressed upon them, as holy only when they feel the influence of the word. This view of the matter supposes a change not in their state, but in their exercise; for if the word were not acting upon them, they would be in all respects like other men who have never experienced its power. But it is implied in the idea of a saint, that he is possessed of holy dispositions when they are lying dormant, and all his faculties are in a state of inactivity; and that there remains something which distinguishes him from the unregenerate, even when he has fallen into sin. It must be acknowledged that this objection to the denial of holy habits is strong; and that, if what is called the grace of God in the heart is reduced to the direct or immediate operation of the word in exciting our faculties, it is not easy to see how a man can be a saint when he is asleep, or has his thoughts wholly engrossed by something different from religion; or is for a time under the prevailing power of temptation, like David or Peter. At the same time, there is a mode of speaking about habits which is unguarded, and has perhaps led to the opposite extreme of denying their existence, such language being used as imports that they are something distinct from the soul in which they reside; that the grace of God is a substance within a substance, and not merely an effect produced upon the soul or its faculties. We cannot speak of spiritual things without making use of terms which primarily relate to external objects; but some writers, from want of judgment and taste, indulging in an unnecessary grossness of language, materialize subjects, in conceiving which the senses and the imagination can give no assistance. Discarding such phraseology, we maintain that a change is produced in the soul by the mysterious operation of the Spirit, through which it acquires an inclination to act, or a power of acting in a particular manner; that this inclination or power is not occasional but habitual; that it remains when it is not in exercise, as any natural disposition is in the soul although it should not be excited by the presence of its proper object; and that there is at all times a specific difference between the renewed and the unrenewed man. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him."\*

The pattern according to which believers are sanctified, is the holiness of the divine nature. "Be ye holy, for I also am holy." "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."† Man was created in the image of God, and the design of sanctification is to restore him to his original state. We are like our Maker in the spiritual essence of our souls, we are like him in power; that is, our rational and active nature exhibits some traces of those attributes; but our perfection and glory consists in our resemblance to his holiness. It is to the holiness of God as manifested in Christ, that believers are conformed by the agency of the Spirit; and hence Christ may also be considered as the pattern after which believers are sanctified. I speak of him, not as the second Person of the Trinity, although in this character he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, but as incarnate or clothed with our nature, and in it exhibiting all the graces and virtues which constitute our assimilation to God. We see in him what human nature was, when it was formed by the hand of the Creator and he looked upon it with approbation; and what it must become that it may be pleasing in his eyes, and may be admitted into his glorious presence. Christ should be contemplated in two lights, as an atonement and as an example. In the one character

\* 1 John iii. 9.

† 1 Pet. i. 16. Matt. v. 48.

he has made peace between us and our offended Maker; in the other he has shown us what our Maker is, in respect of his moral attributes, and what he requires us to be; how we should think, and feel, and act, so as to be imitators of God. That he is the pattern according to which those who are the subjects of divine grace are formed, is evident, from his own command to follow him; from the description of true Christians, as "having Christ dwelling in them;" from the purpose of God that all the members of his family should be conformed to the image of his Son; and from the effect of the Gospel upon believers, who are changed by it into "the same image from glory to glory." He is the "first-born among many brethren," superior in dignity, and the model after which they are fashioned. We are exhorted to be "followers of the saints;" and from the contemplation of their character and conduct, we may derive much valuable instruction with respect to our duty, and powerful excitement to the performance of it. But we must not follow them implicitly, because we know that they were liable to error and infirmity, and that some of the most distinguished among them have given melancholy proofs of weakness and depravity. The apostle Paul has pointed out the limits within which they should be imitated. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."\* Thus far we tread upon sure ground; but when we can trace no correspondence between them and him, it is our duty to forsake them. In him alone we can safely confide, in whose conduct the eye of omniscience did not perceive a single flaw, and whom the voice of the Father proclaimed to be "his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased." Let us look to him when we are "running the race set before us."

The rule of sanctification is the word of God. I mean, that this is the rule according to which the Spirit works, forming in us those dispositions which it promises or requires, and the rule according to which we should work in the whole course of our Christian profession. Those who have been emancipated from the service of sin, obey, according to an apostle, that form of doctrine which has been delivered to them; they walk in the light of the Lord and keep his testimonies and statutes. Without multiplying Scriptural references, it is evident to every attentive reader of the sacred writings, that the soul is sanctified by being brought under the illuminating and commanding influence of the word of God. Holiness is our conformity to what it enjoins; and when our thoughts, volitions, and aims, our words and actions, correspond with its letter and its spirit, we are saints in its estimation. No human rule has any right to interfere with our obedience, or should be permitted to dictate to us. Men have devised a variety of observances and practices, in which they have supposed holiness to consist; and, by punctual attention to them, have appeared to themselves and to others to have attained a high degree of sanctity. The Pharisees received with sacred respect the traditions of the elders, fasted often, gave more tithes than the law enjoined, frequently washed their hands and the vessels which they used, that they might avoid every kind of defilement. In imitation of them, many Christians have distinguished themselves by superstitious usages. They have withdrawn from human society, and spent their lives in deserts and monasteries. They have abstained from the flesh of animals, and confined themselves to a vegetable diet; they have macerated their bodies by frequent fasts and severe penances; they have gone on toilsome pilgrimages to visit holy places; they have bound themselves to devote a certain portion of their time to the repetition of prayers; they have entered into vows of poverty, celibacy, and blind obedience to their religious superiors. The professed design of these observances, was to promote the interests of piety and holiness; but they have uniformly failed, because they were not of Divine institution.

\* 1 Cor. xi. 1.



As we cannot serve God by doing what he has not commanded, and still less by doing what he has forbidden, so it is presumptuous to expect his blessing upon means which, being introduced as supplementary to his ordinances, very plainly import that, in this respect, man is wiser than he. Even when used only as auxiliaries to holiness, they must be equally ineffectual, because the communication of grace depending absolutely upon his will, there is no reason to believe that human interference, whatever may be the motive, with a matter which it is his province to regulate, will induce him to deviate from his plan, and to give countenance to the idea, that we know better than our Maker what are the most proper expedients for our moral improvement. He who would please God and obtain his blessing, must adhere closely to his word, "which is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify him, and enjoy him for ever."

As there is a pattern and a rule of our sanctification, so there are means appointed for carrying it on, to the consideration of which I am naturally led by the preceding observation. Those suggested by human wisdom, we have rejected; let us attend to those which God himself has ordained.

First, It is evident that, as the word of God is the rule of holiness, so it is a mean admirably adapted to promote its own design; because it not only points out and inculcates our duty, but presents many considerations calculated to work powerfully upon the will and the affections. It not only delivers naked precepts, which recommend themselves to us by our perception of their conformity to reason and truth; but it exhibits them in all the loveliness of example, in the history of the saints, and particularly in that of our Redeemer. Holiness, if I may speak so, appears in an animated form, and, displaying all its graces before us, fixes our attention, and engages our love. The idea of the ancient philosopher is realized by the incarnation of virtue; and although his prediction is not fulfilled, that all men would fall down and adore it, yet this is the effect upon those whose hearts are made, by Divine grace, to feel its attractions. The word of God holds out the greatest encouragements to the study of holiness, in the promises of Divine assistance with which it is replenished. How well calculated these are to promote the design, will be manifest to every person who has seriously reflected upon his own moral weakness, and has felt the paralyzing effect of such meditation. 'How is it possible for me,' the sinner is apt to exclaim, when he is called to purify his heart, 'how is it possible for me to cleanse myself from the pollution of sin? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? Then may I, who am accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.' In this state of despondency, the word of God affords us relief by assurances of supernatural grace. When it says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling," it adds, "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."\* It places before us the most interesting motives—the love of God, and the love of Christ; the invaluable benefits which have already been bestowed upon us, and the new blessings which we may expect to obtain; the peace, the consolation, the joy, the hope with which our heavenly Father refreshes the souls, and recompenses, in this world, the services of his obedient children. In short, it displays before the eyes of the runner in the Christian race, the glorious prize which awaits him at the end of his course, the immortal crown which the righteous Judge will bestow upon him. We know, from experience, the efficacy of hope in stimulating and sustaining our exertion. The Scriptures enlist this principle of human nature in the service of religion, and exhort us to be "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."†

\* Phil. ii. 12, 13.

† 1 Cor. xv. 58.

In the second place, All the other ordinances are means of sanctification. I shall take notice of these two, Prayer, and the Lord's Supper. Prayer, besides its direct tendency to impress the mind with a sense of divine things, to heighten our reverence and esteem for the object of worship, to increase our desire for the blessings which we ask, and our abhorrence of the evils from which we implore deliverance; prayer, besides these effects, which it is morally fitted to produce, has, for its direct object, the obtaining of the communications of grace. It consists, not only of adoration and thanksgiving, but also of petition. It is the application of a sinful creature, conscious of guilt, wants, and wretchedness, to the infinite mercy and beneficence of the Creator; and, as it is authorized by his command, it never fails, when it is presented in the name of the Mediator, to bring down the blessing. Its effect is similar to that produced upon the face of Moses by his intercourse with God. The soul, returning from the sanctuary, shines with spiritual glory. By strength not his own, the Christian overcomes difficulties, repels temptations, and advances with a steady progress in the path of obedience: "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need."\* The connexion of the Lord's Supper with the sanctification of the soul is equally manifest. The very emblems which are used, point it out as an institution adapted to the purpose of invigorating the graces of the Christian. As bread and wine furnish nutriment to the body, so the body and blood of Christ, or, in other words, his atonement and its benefits, contribute to the nourishment of the soul. While the ordinance powerfully impresses upon the mind the unspeakable love of Christ and the great evil of sin, and thus excites two principles of mighty efficacy in the purification of the soul,—gratitude to him and abhorrence of it,—it is the medium of communication between the Saviour and his faithful disciples, in whom he works anew by his Spirit, to carry on to perfection the good work which he has begun. Sitting at his table, and partaking of his bounty, they renew their baptismal vows in humble dependence upon his grace, by which only they shall be enabled to perform them. They devote themselves to his service, not from necessity, but from choice; not merely because they are bound to do so, but because they prefer him to every other master. A deep sense of what they have enjoyed, and what they have done, remains. Their faith is more confident; their love is more ardent; their resolution is more firm; their state of mind is more spiritual and heavenly. Like a way-faring man, who has rested and been refreshed at a place of entertainment, and then resumes his journey with renovated vigour, they go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion." "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."†

In the third place, The dispensations of Providence are means of sanctification: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."‡ The apostle makes use of the universal term "all," to signify that nothing is excluded, and that there is a co-operation of events to promote the spiritual interests of believers. And here we must admire the infinite wisdom and Almighty power of God, who renders subservient to his merciful designs, things which are not only considered as evil, but are evil in themselves, have a tendency to evil, and were they not controlled and regulated by his superintending care, would be productive of the most injurious effects upon the bodies and the souls, the present and the future well-being of his people. But, as in medical treatment, substances which are nauseous to our senses, substances which, when received into the system, cause in the first instance pain, and substances which are deleterious,

\* Heb. iv. 16.

† John vi. 57.

‡ Rom. viii. 28.



are administered in such quantities and with such mixtures, that the ultimate effect is the removal of the disease and the confirmation of health; so it is in the economy of heaven. The object aimed at, is the spiritual health of the patient; and this is the result of the bitter draughts which he is compelled to swallow, and of the pain of amputation to which he is sometimes subjected. The Scriptures frequently speak of affliction as contributing to the progress of holiness: "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."\* You observe the process. Affliction calls into exercise, and strengthens the graces of the Christian, and terminates in the more powerful diffusion of Divine love in the soul, in a more powerful impression of the love of God to us, or a stronger emotion of love on our part to God; by either of which our promptitude and sincerity in serving him will be increased. The sanctifying effect of affliction is pointed out in many passages of Scripture, and it was experienced by the Psalmist, who says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have learned thy law."† It is the discipline which our heavenly Father administers to the members of his family, and it is so necessary and so salutary that none of them is exempted. It is a proof of his love, because his design in correcting them is, that they may be partakers of his holiness. How blessed are the fruits of sanctified affliction! They are the fruits of righteousness, and are of far greater value than the most esteemed temporal blessings. They humble the pride of the people of God, awaken their vigilance, make them feel their own weakness, create a stronger abhorrence of sin, and an increasing indifference to earthly things; inspire a meek submission to the will of God, and, leading the thoughts to heaven, stir up longing desires for the peace which awaits them there, and for the pure joys of religion, which are earnest of its felicity. I have confined the illustration to the effects of adversity, but all the dispensations of Providence, under the direction of Divine wisdom and goodness, have the same tendency, and are included in that comprehensive plan of benevolence, which God is carrying on for the final happiness of the objects of his love.

These are the means which God employs in sanctifying his people; but as many who are exposed to their influence manifestly derive no benefit from them, it is evident that their efficacy does not arise from their fitness to the end, but from the operation of the Spirit. Besides the external means, there are certain exercises of the soul itself, which are subservient to the great design, and which, as they are the effects of the Spirit, may be considered as internal means by which the work is carried on. The following things are necessary to the sanctification of a sinner; that he be in a state in which he can partake of divine influences, that those influences be actually communicated to him, and that his views and feelings be such as shall make holiness the object of his choice, and carry him forward in the practice of it with delight. I shall show you that these pre-requisites are obtained by faith, to which as a secondary cause our sanctification is ascribed.

First, By faith we are united to Christ, and thus are delivered from the curse of the law, which prevented the communications of divine grace to the soul, as we formerly showed. To those who believe, his righteousness is imputed. in consequence of which they are reconciled to God, and are the subjects of his favour. Thus the way is prepared for the restoration of his image. "Wherefore," says Paul to the Romans, "ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."‡ Stript

\* Rom. v. 3—5.

† Ps. cxix. 67.

‡ Rom. vii. 4.

of figures these words signify, that, through the atonement of Christ received by faith, our connexion with the law or covenant of works is dissolved, and being united to him as our living Head, we are enabled to perform those holy duties by which God is glorified. 'The body of Christ,' is the sacrifice of his body on the cross; our 'death to the law,' is our redemption from the curse; our 'marriage to Christ,' is our union to him, and 'the fruit which we bring forth to God, is the acceptable obedience of the heart and the life.

Secondly, By faith we receive sanctifying grace from the fulness of Christ. God has constituted him the source of spiritual influences, and faith the mean by which they are derived from him. Human reason may inquire what peculiar virtue in faith has procured its appointment to this office, and may conceive that other means were better adapted to the end. To us it is sufficient to know the will of God, that his Spirit shall be given to those alone who look to his Son, and trust in him for assistance in the great work of their salvation. When the believer lives, it is Christ who lives in him. He is exhorted to "be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus,"\* who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."† Christians are kept in a state of absolute dependence upon him, so that the good qualities which they possess, and the good actions which they perform, are more properly his than theirs. "Abide in me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me."‡

Thirdly, Faith produces a state of mind which is itself holy, and tends to the increase of holiness. The reasons and motives which the Scripture employs to promote the study of holiness, have no effect till by means of faith they make an impression upon the conscience and heart. In vain do we contemplate the perfect and attractive example of our Saviour, unless by the medium of this grace a living virtue flow from him into our souls, to transform them into his image. In particular, it is by faith that we obtain a comfortable sense of the love of God; and it is this which enlarges our hearts to run in the way of his commandments. It is the opinion of many, that nothing will so powerfully stimulate us to diligence as a state of uncertainty with respect to the issue, and that our activity would be relaxed by the confident belief that we already enjoy the favour of God. But those who think so, betray ignorance of the gospel plan of sanctification. In the economy of grace, privileges are the foundation of duty. Doubts and fears damp the ardour of the soul, and enervate its exertions. When the mind takes such views of the character of God as create a spirit of bondage, it is disqualified for performing acceptable service to him. The temper in which we do serve him is offensive, because it is founded in disbelief of his word, and the works done under its influence must be rejected as a corrupt thing. He who obeys in the spirit of a slave, will do his duty reluctantly and tremblingly, and is incapable of the zeal, the promptitude, the strenuous efforts, which characterize the man who is born from above. Our obedience to God will not be cheerful and uniform, and continued from year to year amidst discouragements and difficulties, unless we love him; and we cannot love him, unless we have some hope at least, that we are the objects of his love. Hence we perceive how necessary faith is, by which this hope or persuasion is attained. Never will the exercises of the Christian harmonize more fully with the will of God, never will his desire of holiness be stronger, and his efforts to make progress in it be more vigorous and successful, than when he is looking up to him as his gracious Father in Christ, contemplating the wonders of his love in redemption, and rejoicing in the present sense of his favour, and in the hope of infinite and ever-enduring

\* 2 Tim. ii. 1.

† 2 Cor. xii. 9.

‡ John xv. 4.



blessedness in the world to come. "Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments."\*

There are several other particulars connected with the subject of sanctification, which I would have introduced if time had permitted. I might have shown you that the work is progressive, like the shining light which shineth more and more to the perfect day; that it is sometimes suspended, but never totally destroyed; and that it is completed at death, when the souls of believers are made perfect in holiness. I might have also pointed out its advantages, and its tendency to glorify God, and adorn our profession; but I shall leave these topics to your own meditations.

## LECTURE LXXVI.

### ON GOOD WORKS.

Good Works, the Fruits of Regeneration—Meaning of this Phrase—Nature of Good Works: Necessary that they should be Conformable to the Law of God; be Performed from Respect for his Authority, from Love to Him, and with a View to his Glory—Possible only to Believers—General Remarks respecting them.

HAVING explained the privilege of sanctification, I proceed to speak of good works, which are the fruits of the change effected by divine grace in the soul. We have already seen, that they are not the condition of justification, which is obtained solely by faith, but that they are not therefore unnecessary, because there are many reasons why a believer should perform them, and many important purposes which they serve. I do not intend to resume these topics, but in this lecture shall confine myself to an illustration of their nature, and some remarks of a general kind.

The phrase, Good Works, is often understood in a sense too limited, and which gives an imperfect view of the effect of supernatural grace, and of the duty of a Christian. If you attend to the manner in which the expression is frequently used, you will find, that it comprehends only a part of the works to which "believers are created again in Christ Jesus," and that the most important part is omitted. Many seem to have no idea of any good works, but those which are enjoined by the second table of the law; and their morality is summed up in sobriety, justice, and benevolence, of which the principal or sole object is the temporal welfare of our brethren. The great design of Christianity, as they represent it, is to render us temperate, kind, and charitable. It is thus that the natural aversion of the heart to God discovers itself, even when it is professedly inculcating obedience to his law. The duties of which he is the immediate object are overlooked, or treated as of inferior importance. We are not surprised to find this mutilated morality taught by infidels, who are Atheists or not much different, and consider all religion towards God as superfluous and absurd; it being their opinion that it is not by prayers, and praises, and other exercises of piety, that we are to please him, if there is such a Being and he takes any notice of our conduct, but by acting properly in the various relations subsisting between us and our brethren. But it is lamentable, that the

\* Ps. cxix. 166.

language of Christian teachers should so often show, that they have studied in the same school. When some of them talk of good works, we hear much of meekness, and candour, and beneficence, and the forgiveness of injuries, but little or nothing of faith, and love to God, and the dedication of the heart to him, and zeal for his glory. It is not a false charge which has been brought against such men, that they preach heathen morality; for it is separated in a great measure from piety, and chiefly consists in the social virtues. When we speak of good works, we understand the words in the most extensive sense, as comprehending the whole duty of man, prescribed in both tables of the law; and we remember the declaration of Him, whom alone we call our Master, that "to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, is the first and great commandment."

I would observe farther, that there is often a very incautious way of speaking concerning the relative value of good works. They are not only contrasted with faith to the depreciation of the latter, from ignorance, it may be presumed, of what faith is, of which I know not a more notable specimen than may be found in a well-known paper of the *Spectator* concerning faith and morality;\* but they are represented as the ultimate end of religion, as the terminating point of its wonderful apparatus of contrivances and means. Thus, other important matters are thrown into the shade. Faith is undervalued; the atonement is overlooked, or regarded only as an expedient for advancing the interests of virtue; nothing is heard of but eternal and immutable morality; and so large a space does it fill in the understandings or imaginations of some men, that all other points of religion dwindle into insignificance, and they adopt the celebrated but senseless maxim, that it matters not what is our creed, if our life is orthodox. The ultimate end of religion is the glory of God in the salvation of sinners; and his glory is manifested not only by their obedience to his law, but by every part of the scheme of redemption; by the process, so far above the ideas and calculations of reason, which has reconciled his justice and mercy, and restored his lost image in the soul of man. But, although it were granted that the object to which the several steps in the plan of redemption are subservient, is the sanctification of our nature, which puts it again into a capacity to serve and enjoy its Creator, we should still object to the extravagant importance which is assigned to good works; for this reason, that by good works, those who speak of them in this manner, principally or exclusively mean the common duties of life; and were they honestly to state their sentiments, it would appear that the design of religion is accomplished, in making us good members of families, good neighbours, and good subjects of the state; not too strict and scrupulous, however, but attentive to decorum, and free from any gross and habitual vice. But all this might have been effected, without the circuitous method which has been adopted; without the death of a divine Redeemer, and the descent of the heavenly Spirit; by a plain rule of duty, and the operation of natural sentiments and affections. The design of Christianity is nobler and more extensive, namely, to make man holy in heart, as well as in life; to inspire him with the love of God; to give God the supreme place in his affections, that he may love his fellow creatures only in subordination to him, and for his sake; to establish the empire of the Divine will in his conscience, and to secure the prompt and cheerful performance of all the duties, of those which respect God, in the first place, and of those which respect man, in the second. Good works, as commonly understood, are only a branch, and, to speak still more correctly, are only fruits, of the holiness which religion infuses into those who are subject to its influence. The design is to make all things new; to fill the mind with light, and the heart with love; to form beings



on whom their Maker can look with unmixed complacency; and, when this great moral change is completed, religion may be said to have attained its end.

I now proceed to inquire into the nature of good works. Here it is proper to observe, that something is necessary to make a work good in itself; and that other things are necessary to make it good as performed by us.

That a work may be good in itself, it must be enjoined by the law of God, the sole rule of obedience. The command of man cannot make a work good, unless it be, at the same time, virtually or explicitly commanded by God: the suggestions of reason do not possess sufficient authority, because it is not our supreme guide, and is liable to error. He who created us, has alone a right to prescribe the mode in which we should exert our faculties, and fulfil the purposes of our being. We find the sinful practices of the Jews sometimes condemned, simply on the ground that they were not commanded, and without a reference to their obvious pravity. "The children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord; they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart." And God says, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."\* On this ground, all those works are rejected, which are enjoined by superstition, and are supposed to possess so much merit, as to recommend the performer in a particular manner to the favour of God. The Papist undertakes pilgrimages to places fancied to be holy, submits to penances and frequent fasts, repeats appointed prayers in a given number and at stated times, and presents offerings to the church, in the full persuasion that his acts of piety are pleasing to God, and will procure a reward; but, as he proceeds solely upon the ground of human authority, he loses his labour, and his services are set aside by the simple question, "Who hath required this at your hands?" It is plain that duty is a relative term, and implies obligation; but the source of all moral obligation is the will of God. This is the reason why some things should be done, and other things should not be done. Our own opinion will not give goodness to our works; for, on this supposition, we should be a law to ourselves, and independent of the Sovereign of the universe: their goodness can arise solely from their conformity to the standard which the Divine authority has established.

Some moralists have maintained that the character of an action depends upon the intention of the agent, insomuch that, if a man have a good design, it will justify the means which he employs to accomplish it. This is the meaning of the celebrated maxim of certain casuists in the church of Rome, that *the end sanctifies the means*; and practically it is adopted by others who excuse themselves, and even claim praise, when they have erred, on account of the alleged purity of their motives. It is acknowledged that an action good in itself may become bad through intention; or in other words, it may be divested of all moral worth by being performed with an unlawful design, and the agent may be guilty of sin in the divine estimation. The giving of alms is not a virtue when it flows from ostentation; nor zeal for truth when it originates in pride and passion; nor prayer when the object is to be seen of men. But although intention may convert good into evil, it does not possess the opposite power of turning evil into good. To ascribe to it such power is to deny that there is any essential difference of actions, to render morality entirely an arbitrary thing, to represent it as continually changing its character, so that what is vicious to-day may be virtuous to-morrow, and what is vice in one man may be virtue in another, according to the views by which they are respectively

\* Jer. vii. 30, 31. Matt. xv. 9.

influenced. It sets aside the law of God, and substitutes, in the room of a permanent standard, the ever-varying decisions of the human mind, blinded by prejudice, warped by passion, and forming its judgments upon deceitful appearances and short-sighted calculations. The only province which ought to be assigned to intention in morality, is to give value to such actions as are conformable to the law of God, to the goodness of which it is indispensably necessary that the state of the mind be right. Men may think that they are doing God good service, but this idea will not exculpate them, if they are like the Jews, who sought to promote his glory by opposing the truth and persecuting its friends. It is sufficient to explode the doctrine of intention to consider the extent to which it would carry us; for upon this principle many of the greatest crimes might be justified, because those who committed them imagined that they were doing their duty.

No work, therefore, is good in itself unless it be commanded. The Church of Rome teaches, that there are works of supererogation, meaning by these, works which men are not bound to perform by any positive command, and which therefore exceed the measure of their duty, and create a superfluous degree of merit that may be transferred to others for their benefit. They are not required from any man; but they are recommended by what they call *counsels of perfection*, counsels to aim at higher attainments in holiness than are necessary to our salvation. They found this doctrine upon the advice or counsel of Paul to the Corinthians, not to marry;\* and particularly upon the words of our Lord to the young man, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor."† With respect to the first, it is plain that abstinence from marriage was not recommended as a higher degree of holiness, but as good "for the present distress;" that is, as a matter of prudence, because it was a time of persecution, when those who were encumbered with families would be exposed to particular inconvenience and danger; and hence it appears that it is not a counsel addressed to Christians in general. With respect to the second, it was not a counsel, but a command to an individual, of whose sincerity our Lord was pleased to make trial, by demanding the sacrifice of all his earthly possessions. The perfection of which he speaks is not a higher degree of holiness than others had attained, but the perfection of sincerity; 'if thou wilt prove thyself sincere in seeking eternal life, go and sell all that thou hast.' It is a proof of deplorable blindness, of unaccountable stupidity, for any man to imagine that it is possible to exceed the measure of our duty; for what more can be conceived than is implied in these two commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?" This is a summary of the whole duty of man. The highest possible love to God, and the highest possible love to our neighbour, are already required; and our love to both is to be manifested in every way which Scripture and Providence may point out. Works of supererogation have no existence but in the vain imaginations of ignorant and self-righteous men. The Church of England says well in her fourteenth article, "Voluntary works, besides, over, and above God's commandments, which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogance and pride. For by them men do declare, that they not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required. Whereas, Christ saith plainly, 'When ye have done all that ye are commanded to do, say, We are unprofitable servants.' "

Having seen what is necessary to render an action materially, let us next inquire how it becomes formally, good. An action may be good in its own

\* 1 Cor. vii.

† Matt. xix. 21.



nature, and yet may be so vitiated by the state of mind in which it is performed, as to be of no value in the Divine estimation.

I observe, then, that it is requisite to the moral goodness of an action, that it be performed from respect for the authority of God. Its abstract nature is the same, when we are influenced by any other principle; but, then, it is not an act of obedience, and cannot therefore be acceptable to God, as our Lawgiver and Judge. Philosophers have inquired into the foundation of morality, and, as we might have expected, have come to different conclusions. They have told us, that it is agreeable to the fitness of things; that it is conformable to nature; that it is conformable to reason; that it is conformable to truth; that it is productive of good. But whatever theory we adopt, none of them proves any thing more than that there is a propriety, a decency, an order, an utility, in doing some things and not doing others. No proper obligation results from any of these systems; they do not take hold of conscience, and create the idea of duty. The Scriptures, disregarding all metaphysical speculations, go directly to the point, and lay down the only intelligible and practical foundation of morality, namely, the will of God. In reading them, you do not find that particular actions are enjoined upon the principles of philosophy, but on the stronger grounds of religion. It is the will of God, that we should do this or that; it is his law, by which we should regulate our conduct. To do our duty, is not to satisfy the dictates of our own minds, but to express our reverence for him. Virtue is obedience, that is, conformity to the will of a superior; and the great example proposed to us, is that of our Saviour, who came "not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him."

From these observations it follows, that to constitute a work formally good, it must be done, not because it will please ourselves or others, but because it is commanded by God. Hence you perceive the reason that some works, which have a specious appearance, and excite the admiration of men, are rejected by the Searcher of hearts. The true principle of obedience is wanting. While the persons are acting in literal conformity to the law, the Lawgiver is not in all their thoughts. Hence also you may see whence that persuasion is necessary, of which the apostle speaks when he says, "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin."\* This is not justifying faith, or faith in Christ, as has sometimes been imagined; and hence the words have been improperly quoted, to prove that none but believers can perform works acceptable to God; but it is an assurance in our minds, that what we are doing is right, founded upon the careful study of the law. If we should do what is lawful in itself, thinking it to be unlawful, to us it would be a sin; if we should do it without knowing any thing respecting its nature, the best that could be said of it is, that it is neither good nor evil. Then only are our works right, when we know them to be commanded, and do them because they are commanded.

I observe once more, That to the goodness of our works, it is necessary that they flow from love to God. Love to him is stated to be the sum of the first table of the law; and, although love to our neighbour is represented to be the sum of the second, yet, unless it be founded on love to God, it will not be a religious affection. It is conceivable that a man may perform a variety of duties because God has commanded them, and at the same time perform them unwillingly. Conscience may force him to act contrary to his inclinations. The principle which predominates may be fear; under the influence of which a person will earnestly and diligently do what is necessary to ward off the danger which he dreads; but he is only submitting to a less, in order to escape a greater evil. The works which he performs, are not his choice; he is impelled to them by a very different principle from that of obedience. Now, although

\* Rom. xiv. 23.

his outward actions may be strictly conformable to the standard of duty, and much benefit may result from them to others and to the cause of religion, yet their moral worth is completely destroyed by the state of his feelings. No such service from a son would be pleasing to his father; nor would a master approve of a servant, however punctually he might execute his orders, whom he knew to be under the influence of a secret dislike to his duty. We see, then, that love to holiness is indispensably requisite. To the all-seeing eye of God the heart is manifest; and he looks more to its movements, than to the professions of the mouth and the sanctity of the conduct. So peremptorily does he demand the heart, and so necessarily does it enter into the essence of acceptable obedience, that nothing can atone for the want of its concurrence. It is vain to think that we shall please God, while we entertain no friendly sentiments and dispositions towards him; and these, you know, are the native fruits of love. Love is the soul of duties, and the external action is the body. It is but the half, and the inferior half, which he gives who obeys without love. This point is so plain as to stand in need of no farther illustration; and I shall only add, that a single duty emanating from love to God, is of greater account in his estimation than the multiplied services of the hypocrite, who courts the applause of men, or is stimulated by the servile principle of fear.

Lastly, It is necessary that our works be done for the glory of God; for, as all things were made for him as well as by him, we do not fulfil the end of our existence, unless we constantly refer to his honour as our ultimate end. When men make *themselves* their end, when they aim at the gratification of their vanity, and the advancement of their temporal interests, or even at their eternal happiness independently of the glory of God, they serve themselves and not him. The character of actions is fixed by their motives; and there must be an essential moral difference between actions which proceed from a regard to ourselves, and those which are influenced by a regard to our Maker. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."\* The doing of all things to the glory of God, is an expression of frequent occurrence, but often, perhaps, it is not distinctly understood. It suggests the idea of acting with a design to acknowledge him before our fellow-men, as a glorious Being, and to excite them to reverence, admire, and praise him; and this unquestionably is the tendency of those good actions which are of a public nature. But, as this should be the end of all our actions, even of those which our brethren have no opportunity to observe, to do all things to the glory of God, properly signifies, to do them from love to him and respect for his authority, and is therefore virtually included in the qualifications of good works which have been already mentioned. A Christian can have no intention to display the glory of God before others in his secret devotion; but he does give him due honour, even in his closet, by the pious emotions of his soul, by adoration, confession, and thanksgiving, by reverence and gratitude, and the exercises of faith and hope. Now, if we understand nothing more to be meant, than that we should do all things in obedience to his command, and from a profound regard to his character and perfections, we shall see that there is no occasion to agitate the question, Whether there should be, in each action, a distinct reference to his glory, or a general purpose to glorify him be sufficient? because it will be evident, that all our actions should be performed in the spirit of religion, and that every action so performed is good. If we are not impressed at that moment with his authority, and have no desire to please him, the action is no part of acceptable obedience.

It is so evident from what has been said, that good works can be performed only by such as have been translated into a state of grace, that it is unnecessary

\* 1 Cor. x. 31.



to mention it distinctly; and besides, this important point was fully considered when we were explaining the subjects of regeneration and sanctification. In man, prior to his conversion, there dwells no good thing; and the fruit will be corrupt, till the nature of the tree is changed: "We are created" in Christ Jesus unto good works;\* that is, good works are the effect of the renovation of the soul by the Spirit of God. "I am the vine, ye are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me."†

It is an obvious inference from the preceding discussion, that works truly good can be performed only by those who believe and live under the influence of the Gospel. There is no difficulty, therefore, in determining what estimate we should form of the boasted virtues of the heathens. They have been pronounced to be *splendida peccata*; but, by many, this has been deemed a harsh and uncharitable judgment. It would be a satisfactory mode of settling the dispute, or, at least, it might make a stronger impression upon some, if, instead of dwelling on vague generalities, we would come to particulars; and, having demanded a specification of the virtues in question, should then proceed to subject them to the test of Scripture and sound reason. I believe that the imposing display which is made to pass before us, by the power of declamation and loose panegyric, would thus lose much of its splendour, and would be reduced within a narrow compass; and that certain actions, when brought near and strictly examined, would not appear in the same light as when viewed at a distance, and surrounded with the false glory which ignorant admiration and prostituted eloquence have bestowed upon them. Instead of assuming it as a fact capable of demonstration, that some of the heathens were eminently virtuous, their advocates should show us what their virtues were; and then, I am confident, we should find that they were few in number and of a dubious character, if not altogether unworthy of the name. It is intolerable to hear Christians giving the name of virtue to the mere exercise of the natural affections without any religious motive; to acts of natural courage; to patriotism, as it is commonly understood and was exemplified among the Greeks and Romans; to a proud morality, which elated the possessors with self-conceit, and led them to claim an equality, or a superiority to the gods. If it be true that a work is not good unless it be performed from respect for the authority of God, the works of heathens were not good; because they could not have an intention to obey him whom they did not know, and their virtues were founded solely upon self-respect, or a sense of propriety, or views of utility. If it be true, that no work is good unless it is done with a view to please God, and from love to him, the works of the heathens were not good; for, as a celebrated author has observed, "before the Christian religion had, as it were, humanized the idea of the Divinity, and brought it somewhat nearer to us, there was very little said of the love of God. The followers of Plato have something of it, and only something; the other writers of pagan antiquity, whether poets or philosophers, nothing at all." The popular deities could not be the objects of love; and the true God, whom some are supposed to have known, removed from common apprehension and wrapt up in the obscurity of his nature, was regarded with distant reverence, and furnished only a subject of speculation. If it be true that no work is good which is not performed for the glory of God, the works of heathens were not good; because we are assured by an apostle, concerning the wisest and best of them, that they did "not glorify him;" and we know that the great design of their virtues was to gratify their own feelings, and to gain the admiration of their countrymen. Why should it be deemed harsh to pronounce this sentence upon the virtues

\* Eph. ii. 10.

† John xv. 4, 5.

of the heathens, even although they had been more numerous and more perfect than they are? What makes some men so feelingly alive to their reputation, while, without scruple, they accuse of hypocrisy persons around them, who are far more virtuous even than Socrates; and, in support of this charge, are ready enough to tell us that the external appearance is of no avail, if the motives are corrupt? It is easy to assert that the motives of heathens were pure; but it is as easy to prove that they were not and could not be pure, ignorant, as they were, of the true religion and destitute of the grace of God. The words of Peter to Cornelius have been often quoted, to prove that the works of heathens are pleasing to God, as well as those of Christians; but they are grossly perverted. "Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but, in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him."\* Any person who considers the context, will see that they do not teach that men of every nation may work righteousness; but that, to whatever nation those who work righteousness belong, they are accepted. No two things can be more different; and that the latter is the true meaning is evident, because the apostle is speaking in reference to the prejudices of the Jews, who believed that they were the objects of the Divine favour, to the exclusion of every other people. This he now discovered to be an error; for, in the case of Cornelius, God had shown, that if there were any righteous Gentiles, they also were acceptable to him. But Cornelius, let it be remembered, was not such a Gentile as Socrates, or Cato, or Aristides, but one who knew the true God, and worshipped him.

There is one qualification remaining, which may be thought necessary to the goodness of our works, namely, that they should be perfect; for it may be said, that since the law of God requires them to be perfect, any defect will change their character, and render them sins rather than duties. Now, it is acknowledged that all the works of the saints are imperfect. There is not one of them who can truly say, that he loves God with all his heart; or that, in the full sense of the expression, he loves his neighbour as himself. The flesh lusts against the spirit, and impedes its operations. The regenerated have been compared to a man lately recovered from sickness, whose motions are feeble and languid; and hence, there is something in their best works for which they might be rejected. But let it be observed, that although the works of the saints do not exactly correspond with the demands of the law, they do not labour under any essential defect. The principle is right, and the motive is right. The defect lies only in degree. They are not perfectly good, but still they are good. They are *so far* conformable to the requisitions of the law, but not to the full extent: they are acts of obedience to the will of the Lawgiver. The metal is not free from alloy, but it is gold. Imperfect works would be certainly rejected, if offered as the ground of justification, because, in this case, a righteousness without a single flaw is the indispensable condition; but, when viewed in another light they are approved, because there is much in them which is pleasing to God. To this should be added, that they are presented to him through the mediation of his Son. For his sake, what is evil is forgiven; and what is good, being recommended by his merit and intercession, comes up before the throne of heaven as incense, and as the evening sacrifice.

Good works are incumbent upon the followers of Christ without distinction. From some civil duties persons of certain orders and professions are exempted, in compliment to them or from the necessity of the case; but the authority of the law of God has no limits, and none are too high or too low to be subject to its operation: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God be careful to main-

\* Acts x. 34, 35.



tain good works; these things are good and profitable unto men.”\* It may be observed, however, that all good works are not formally incumbent upon all; but that, while some are universally obligatory, others are binding only in particular circumstances. Works of justice, temperance, and piety, are required from all without exception, because no situation can occur in which it could be justifiable to refrain from worshipping our Maker, to indulge irregular appetite, or to defraud and injure our neighbour. But every man is not bound to give alms, because some are so poor as to be themselves the objects of charity; and there are many duties which arise out of the relations of men to one another, and which therefore cannot be demanded from those who do not stand in such relations. He fulfils his duty, who endeavours to glorify God and to do good to men, by the faithful exertion of the powers conferred upon him and the diligent improvement of the opportunities which he enjoys, by moving in his own sphere and performing the particular service which the Master of the household has assigned to him.

Every person has it in his power to perform good works. I do not mean that he has by nature moral ability, but that he has means and opportunities. Of possible things there are some which one man can do, and another cannot; and of duties, as we have seen, some are not incumbent upon all, but are required only in particular circumstances; but there is no person, however obscure his station and limited his powers, who is under the necessity of remaining inactive. Every man may practise self-command, and every man ought to cultivate piety towards God, and charity towards his brethren. There is not an individual who is not somehow connected with others, and is not called to some relative duties. If he has nothing to bestow in the form of alms, and no influence to exert in behalf of the temporal interests of his brethren, he can give them his good offices and good counsels; and these are comprehended under the denomination of good works as well as more substantial deeds; for what we speak, as well as what we do, falls under the prescription of the law, and God is glorified both by our words and by our actions. Where is the man who may not speak a word in commendation of religion, or for the instruction and consolation of his acquaintance and strangers? It is surely a good work to communicate knowledge to the ignorant, to silence the gainsayer, to reclaim the backslider, to warn the tempted, to cheer the melancholy, and to encourage the dying. If a man were living in a solitude, he might still perform acceptable works; for he could there mortify his appetites and passions, improve his graces, carry on his necessary labours in the spirit of religion, meditate plans for the good of his fellow-men if he should ever again mix with society, and make the desert resound with the voice of prayer and praise.

This leads me to remark, that there are many good works existing in their first principles which are never brought to perfection, but which the eye of God beholds with approbation. Such are the benevolent purposes and pious wishes of the saints, springing from love to God and to man, which are not matured from the want of circumstances favourable to their development and growth. As there is much evil which never assumes a sensible form, so there is much good which never attracts human observation. But He sees it who searches the heart; and as in some cases he has taken public notice of it in his word, so we may believe that it will be made known in the day when all secrets shall be revealed, as no small part of the goodness by which his people will then be distinguished. “The Lord said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart.”† Good intentions, although they should fail to accom-

\* Tit. iii. 8.

† 2 Chron. vi. 8.

plish their object, are not lost. They are treasured up in heaven, and will receive their reward. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."\*

There are two extremes with respect to good works, into which men have been betrayed through the perverseness of their hearts, and ignorance of the truth. Some have ascribed merit to them, and represented them as the procuring cause of justification and eternal life; and others, totally mistaking the design of those passages which declare them to be useless for a particular purpose, have rejected them as altogether unnecessary, and pronounced it to be dangerous to inculcate them. In the days of the apostle James there were persons of this description, who trusted in an unproductive faith; and even our own age has given birth to Antinomian teachers, who, in their injudicious zeal against those who oppose the law to grace, exalt grace upon the ruins of the law. These men give great countenance to the objection against justification by faith, that it weakens the obligations to holiness, and supersedes the necessity of it. They are appealed to as living proofs that the objection is true. But we have formerly seen that there is no foundation for it in the doctrine when scripturally stated.

Antinomianism is indignantly exploded by all the enlightened friends of the gospel, and their due place is assigned to good works in the system of religion. But it seems to have tainted the minds of not a few who in words disavow it, as we may infer from the suspicion or dislike with which they view expositions of moral duties, and the desire which they discover to be always entertained with discourses on the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. The time was, when the minister who explained and enforced relative duties in detail was heard with a jealous ear, and was in danger of being assailed with the accusation of legalism. This unfounded prejudice, I believe, is passing away; but it still retains its influence upon the weak and ignorant. Good works should always be inculcated upon Christian principles; and when they are placed upon a proper foundation, and enjoined for the ends which the Scriptures point out, they are an important and necessary part of public instruction. Ministers should "affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works."† This is the command of Paul, and he does not act in his spirit, who, intimidated by popular clamour, always insists on doctrinal topics. In this case he pleases not God but man. The ignorance which finds fault with him is entitled to no respect, and if the censure is dictated, as in some cases we have reason to suspect, by a worse principle—the disinclination of the human heart to holiness, and the presumptuous hope of salvation without it—it should be treated with the contempt which it deserves. When men would separate what Christ has joined together, and set one part of his religion in opposition to another, the audacious attempt should rouse the holy zeal of all the friends and defenders of the truth. By the same authority which explodes or throws into the shade one part of the system, the other may be subjected to the same dishonourable usage. If one class of men demand faith to the exclusion of works, another may as reasonably demand works to the exclusion of faith. He is a wise steward, who arranges every thing in its proper place, and brings it forth in its order and season. He is a faithful minister, who inquires not what are the fancies and tastes of his audience, but what is the truth; and regardless of human censure or applause, fearlessly teaches men "to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded them."

It has been sometimes said, that it is unnecessary to be particular in inculcating good works, because if men are brought to believe in Christ, obedience

\* 2 Cor. viii. 12.

† Tit. iii. 8.



will certainly follow. This sage remark supposes that divine grace operates upon believers, not agreeably to their rational nature, by instruction, exhortation and admonition, but instinctively, and contrary to the plan which is actually adopted in the dispensation of religion, where there is an ample provision of means for promoting the sanctification of the soul; and what is more, it represents those parts of Scripture as useless in which duties are detailed and enforced, our Lord as having spent his strength in vain while he was preaching his sermon on the mount, and the apostles as having filled up with moral lessons a considerable space in their Epistles, which would have been more usefully occupied with doctrinal discussions. The opinion which leads to such conclusions is worse than absurd.

## LECTURE LXXVII.

### ON CONSCIENCE.

Connexion of this Subject with the Preceding Lectures—Nature of Conscience—Its Office—Its Fallibility—The Rule of Conscience, the Will of God—The Scriptures the only Rule to Believers—Their Adequacy and Supremacy as such—Authority of an Erring Conscience—God alone the Lord of Conscience.

HAVING finished what I intended to say on the three great privileges of believers in Christ, justification, adoption, and sanctification, I deem this the proper place to introduce some observations on Conscience, which is intimately connected with those privileges. Two things are necessary with regard to it: that it should be freed from a sense of guilt, which is the cause of great inquietude and alarm; and that it should be purified from the errors and corruptions by which its right exercise is impeded. The first effect is produced in justification, when the sinner is pardoned, and, through faith, is filled with peace and joy; the second is the work of sanctification, in which the illumination of the mind, and the mortification of unholy appetites and passions, give it new ability and new liberty to execute its functions with fidelity.

Let us begin with inquiring into the import of the term. Conscience is the Latin word in an English form, and *conscientia* is a literal translation of the Greek word *συνειδησις*. Both terms evidently import something more than simple knowledge, which would have been expressed by *scientia* and *επισις*. Compounded as they are with prepositions which signify *with*, they suggest the idea of conjunct knowledge; and this has been explained in various ways. This power, say some, is called conscience, because it conjoins knowledge with knowledge—universal knowledge, namely, of the law, with particular knowledge, namely, of the fact, by applying the one to the other. Thus, after a man has done a certain action, he reasons in the following manner: ‘I know that such an action is forbidden by the law of God; I know that I have done this action, and therefore I have committed a sin.’ This process is an operation of conscience; and it consists in bringing together our knowledge of the law and our knowledge of our own conduct. Others explain the matter, or at least express it, somewhat differently, calling conscience the knowledge which a man has with himself as with another; by which they mean, I presume—for their language is awkward and obscure—that conscience consists in the knowledge of our actions, and a comparison of them with the standard of duty in our

own minds. Another mode of explaining the term, is to consider the conjunct knowledge of which it is expressive, as referring to the knowledge of men and the knowledge of God, and intimating that both are employed about our actions. While we know, God knows them; and of this important fact it is the office of conscience to remind us. There are two witnesses of every thing we do, our own consciousness, and the Great Being in whose presence we always are.

Conscience ought not to be confounded with consciousness. The latter term denotes our knowledge of what is passing in our minds, and does not relate to external things. I am conscious of my own existence, but am not conscious of the existence of any other person, however firmly I may believe it. Conscience is conversant not only with what is passing in our minds, but also with our external actions; with our thoughts and actions which are past, as well as with those which are present; and with the actions of other men, so far as they are the subject of moral judgment. It is different also from the understanding, the province of which is to acquire the knowledge of the nature, and qualities, and relations of objects, and to pronounce what is proposed to it to be true or false, by means of its intuitive perceptions, or by a process of reasoning; while the objects of conscience are more limited in number, and present themselves under a different aspect. They are considered, not as true or false, but as good or evil, morally good and morally evil.

Among Scholastic Divines, and some more modern authors who have transplanted their barbarous terms and distinctions into their writings, it has been a subject of discussion, whether conscience is an act, a habit, or a faculty. If I apprehend the meaning rightly, those who call it only an act, deny that conscience is a distinct power of the mind, and conceive it to be merely an occasional application of our knowledge of right and wrong to our actions. Those who call it a habit, seem to hold that it is not natural to men, but is the effect of instruction and discipline. Conscience, they say, is knowledge, and knowledge is a habit, or something acquired; thus confounding the improvement of a faculty with the faculty itself. If, because our knowledge of right and wrong is acquired by education and reflection, it follows that conscience is not an original principle of our nature, it would be easy to prove, by the same kind of reasoning, that there is no such original principle as intellect. Some attempt to evade this difficulty, by distinguishing habits into innate and acquired, and telling you that conscience is something between these, and partakes of the nature of both; and then ending with such an explanation as, if it have any meaning, amounts to this, that after all, conscience is a faculty, although they choose to call it a habit. Such is the useless trash, under the name of Logic or Metaphysics, with which many theological volumes are filled.

It has been disputed, among men of more correct and luminous modes of thinking, whether conscience should be considered as a distinct faculty of the mind; or merely as the exercise of its other faculties upon a particular subject, and in a particular form. Conscience has been pronounced to be an operation of the judgment, comparing one thing with another—our actions with the standard of duty—and pronouncing their agreement or disagreement. But there is no reason for excessive simplification. We have only to go a step farther, and deny that the soul has any distinct faculties, and that what we call such, are only different modes in which it exerts itself; but, although this were true, it would serve no purpose but to introduce a change in human language, and to set aside as useless many of the speculations of philosophy. If we say that the soul has understanding, because it is capable of knowledge; that it has judgment, because it compares; that it has will, because it chooses and refuses; there seems to be no reason why we should not say also, that it has con



science, because it distinguishes right and wrong, and approves or disapproves of our actions. There seems to be a particular reason why we should account it something more than an operation of the understanding, namely, that there is not a simple perception of agreement and disagreement between the standard of duty and our actions, but an approbation or disapprobation of them, with an anticipation, pleasant or painful, of the consequences. By philosophers, it has been sometimes called the moral sense. They have given it the designation of a sense, to signify that it perceives right and wrong, as the taste perceives sweet and bitter; and of moral sense, to specify the objects about which it is conversant. But, although the term, sense, is sometimes applied to our internal feelings, yet I look upon the phrase, moral sense, as an incongruous combination of terms, and prefer conscience, not only because it occurs in the Scriptures, and is adopted by theologians, but because it is free from ambiguity, and, from association at least, reminds us of an authoritative rule of action, and of a supreme Judge; while the moral sense implies a reference to neither. Besides, to call conscience a sense, implies, that we have instinctive moral perceptions; a supposition which does not accord with experience, and proceeds upon the gratuitous assumption, that this faculty is different from all our other mental faculties, which remain in a dormant state till they are excited, and require culture to fit them for the performance of their functions.

It has been objected against considering conscience as an original power of the mind, not only that it seems to be wanting in some individuals, but that its operations are not uniform. What is esteemed virtuous at one time, becomes vicious at another, and conscience is found to pronounce opposite sentences upon the same action. What the ancient Greeks, for example, practised without shame, is now held in universal abhorrence; and, even in modern times, if you only pass a river, a mountain, or an imaginary line, you shall find different ideas of morality prevailing upon the one side and the other. Hence, conscience appears to be a factitious thing; the result, not of the constitution of our nature, but of education and custom. Having been taught to look upon one action as criminal, we refrain from it, and upon another as good, we practise it; but a different training would have inverted our ideas, and made us regard the former as laudable or harmless, and the latter as infamous or unbecoming. But this reasoning against the existence of a moral principle, is more specious than solid, and might be employed with equal success to disprove any other of our mental faculties. Might it not be shown in the same way, that we have not the power of perceiving truth, because some individuals are born idiots, and men in all ages have been subject to the strangest illusions, and have embraced innumerable errors; and what has been admitted as unquestionably true at one time, has been rejected as manifestly false at another. Did we mean by conscience, an instinctive perception of the moral qualities of actions, it would be a conclusive argument against it, that men's perceptions have been so various and contradictory; but as we mean only a power in the human mind of perceiving them, the modifications to which it is subject from external circumstances, will not appear to any sound reasoner to be a proof of its non-existence.

I have not given a formal definition of conscience; but from the preceding observations you will perceive what I understand by it. It is that faculty which perceives right and wrong in actions, approves or disapproves of them, anticipates their consequences under the moral administration of God, and is thus the cause of peace or disquietude of mind.

A question has been proposed, whether it is possible for conscience to err; and, although it seems to be a plain one, yet it has not received a uniform answer. Some have adopted the negative, affirming that conscience cannot err. They distinguish between a judgment of the mind, and a judgment of con-

science, and say, that the former may be false, but that the latter is always true; not reflecting that, if conscience has any connexion with the understanding, as it must have if it is founded on knowledge, it must be subject to the same errors with the understanding. To support their opinion, they define conscience to be a clear and certain knowledge of the objects with which it is conversant. Now, there is no doubt that, if this definition is admitted, the inference which they draw from it is undeniable; for it is manifest, that, if our conceptions of any subject are distinct and adequate, our judgments concerning it must be conformable to truth. The amount, therefore, of what they say, is, that we cannot be mistaken when we are certainly right; but, for this profound discovery, no man, I presume, will think himself obliged to its authors. We may affirm any thing of any thing, if we are allowed to give an arbitrary definition of it. And this definition of conscience is undoubtedly arbitrary; for conscience, so far as it implies knowledge, is not perfect and infallible knowledge, but that degree of it which we have obtained by the exercise of our intellectual faculties, and with which many errors may be blended.

But some maintain the infallibility of conscience upon a different ground. If conscience may err, they say, it follows that God has deceived us; for he gave us this faculty, and it is his candle shining within us. If God had given conscience as the only rule of our conduct, if he had commanded us to rely with implicit confidence upon its dictates, and if it were still as perfect as it ever was, we might say that the errors into which we are led by it are imputable to its Author. But not one of these pre-requisites is true. Conscience is not our only rule, as we shall afterwards see; its dictates are not therefore to be implicitly obeyed, and it has not continued uninjured amidst the ruin of our moral nature. Conscience, which derives all its light from the understanding, must receive it, if I may speak so, obscured and discoloured as it flows from its source. Does any man say, that, when our understandings err, God has deceived us? No; and let no man say that he has deceived us when conscience errs; for, what is conscience but the application of the knowledge of the understanding to our practice, as a test to examine it? By what law was God bound to preserve conscience from being tainted by sin, any more than our other faculties? It was, indeed, impossible to have preserved it in purity, when the understanding, upon which it depends, was perverted and blinded. It is inconceivable how this notion of the infallibility of conscience could have been adopted by any man who had read his Bible, had reflected upon his own experience, had observed the conduct of others, and, in a word, was possessed of an ordinary portion of common sense. Such is a specimen of the absurd opinions which Theologians of great name have sometimes advanced. As they come in our way, we must take notice of them; but in doing so, there is a waste of precious time.

Let us now proceed to the rules of conscience. It is evident that conscience is not a rule to itself. Man comes into the world, entirely destitute of knowledge, and gradually acquires it as his faculties expand; but in his state of greatest improvement, he is too ignorant of God and himself to be qualified to be his own guide. It is not enough that his intention is good. If he had been created without power to distinguish between right and wrong, or had been left without the means of ascertaining his duty, there might have appeared to be a reason for saying, that to mean well would be sufficient to recommend him to his Maker. But, since there are moral distinctions, and the knowledge of them is confessedly not beyond the reach of the human faculties, it is not to be imagined that our conduct can be acceptable to God, unless it be conformable to them. Those distinctions are founded in the nature of things, or in the will of the Creator, and must therefore be a law to all reasonable creatures. To suppose the intention to sanctify our actions, is to suppose that



virtue and vice are not essentially different; that actions themselves are nothing in a moral estimate, and that the only thing to be considered is the motive or the end. Thus man would, indeed, be a law to himself, and would be accountable only for his designs; every other thing would be exempt from the Divine jurisdiction. Conscience, then, must have a rule. It is plain that the rule is not the example of others, although wise and good, because the best of men are imperfect, and are liable to errors and infirmities; because, even their virtuous actions are not to be imitated, unless we be in similar circumstances, and in the application great mistakes may be committed; and because, without another rule, we could not know whether they were right or wrong. It is implied in the proposal to imitate them, that their actions are good; and this supposition further implies, that there is a standard to which they are conformable. Thus we are led, at the second step beyond them, to that standard as the rule; and exhortations to imitate them, whether delivered in the Scriptures, or by our fellow-men, can only be understood as a call to do what they have done, when we know it to be right from some other source.

I may add, that the opinion of men is not the rule of conscience, any more than their example, because they may mislead us, either from design or from their own previous error. Hence we are commanded to call no man master, and to give this honour to Christ alone; and it is said in reference to the dogmas and commands of men, "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."\* In the church of Rome, the doctrine of probability is maintained, or the doctrine that a man may safely do any thing for which there is a probable reason. And how is this probability to be obtained? Not by searching the Scriptures, but by consulting the Doctors; and if a few of them concur in sentiment, nay, if even one of them pronounce that a thing may be safely done, the person whom he advises may do it, whatever it is, without incurring guilt. Thus the whole law of God has been disannulled, and a sanction has been given to every abomination; for doctors have been found in that Church, who have patronized by their authority every conceivable vice. This is an extreme case; but it shows us the danger of submitting to be guided by the opinions of men. As they and we are subject to the same standard of duty, their opinions can be considered only as their interpretations of the law, which are not authoritative, and ought to be compared with the law itself before they are received.

Casuistical writers distinguish the rules of conscience into two classes. The first is the original, supreme, and independent rule, namely, the will of God, by whatever means it is made known to us. The second class comprehends the laws of men, and our own voluntary engagements, as vows, oaths, promises, and covenants. Now, there is no doubt that a man is bound in conscience to fulfil the engagements into which he has entered to God, and to his fellow-men; that they lay him under an obligation which he cannot violate without guilt, it being always presupposed that they are lawful, and that they constitute rules by which his conduct should be regulated. It is equally certain that we are subject to the authority of others, as parents, masters, and magistrates, whose commands we ought to obey; and their commands may be called rules of conscience, as by them different classes of relative duties are pointed out and enjoined; yet they are only subordinate rules, and in fact are no rules at all, if we understand by a rule, a regulation possessing intrinsic authority. Whatever *power* our superiors may have to enforce obedience, conscience duly enlightened does not recognise their *authority*, unless it perceive an agreement between their commands and the law of God. In truth, the commands of our superiors stand in the same relation to conscience, in

\* Isa. viii. 20.

which the sentences of inferior magistrates stand to the subjects of a state. The latter have no authority in themselves, and all their authority is derived from the law of the land; insomuch that, if they are not conformable to it, they may be treated with contempt, and the magistrate would be punished if he should proceed to enforce them. The power of our superiors over us is founded in the law of God, made known by the light of nature or by revelation; their commands are binding only when that law gives them its sanction; and even our own engagements are not obligatory unless they accord with it, for a promise, a covenant, an oath, a vow to do what is sinful, is in itself null and void, and guilt will be incurred, not by violating but performing it. It follows that the moral obligation of our own engagements, and the moral obligation of the commands of our superiors, are resolvable into the will of God. Here, as in the former cases, our reasoning ends; and therefore, in strict language, his will is the only rule. There is danger in assigning this office to the commands of men, however much we may qualify it. The ignorant and the careless may be led to ascribe more to human authority than its due; and if they should not go so far as to maintain, with the infidel philosopher,\* that virtue and vice are created by the will of the civil magistrate, may however imagine that rulers in church and state have the power of dictating to conscience, of subjecting our civil and religious liberty to restraints to which it would be sinful to refuse to submit, and of making things indifferent, to be duties as sacred as the most express injunctions of the divine law. The apostle Paul, when giving direction to Christians with respect to their civil duties, calls upon them to be subject to their rulers, "not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." But does he mean to insinuate that any new obligation upon conscience arises from their commands? No; his own reasoning shows that the obligation results entirely from the authority of God. "Wherefore ye must needs be subject," that is, as stated in the preceding verse, because "he is the minister of God;" and he thus expresses himself in the beginning of the chapter. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God."† Magistrates, being armed with the power of the state, may compel their subjects either to do what they please, or to suffer; but their moral power is derived from, and limited by the law of God; and it is only when they are considered as acting by his authority, that conscience calls upon us to obey them.

It appears, then, that the rule of conscience is the will of God, or his command which prescribes our duty. This will is the rule of obedience to all intelligent creatures; it is the rule to angels, as we learn from these words of the Psalmist, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word."‡ It was the rule to our Saviour when he sojourned among men. "My meat," he said, "is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."§ To the rule which directs angels, and directed our Redeemer, it is right that we should conform. This will of God is wise and just, and there would be impiety in supposing that there could be any obliquity or irregularity in the conduct which it prescribes. As it is wise and righteous, so it is good and beneficent, always aiming at our welfare, as well as the glory of our Maker; for the tendency of all the commands which it issues is to promote the order and happiness of the universe. It is the will of the Creator, to which creatures should bow with profound reverence. It is the will of a Master, whom his servants ought to obey. It is the will of a Father, which his children should regard not only with respect, but with gratitude.

The will of God is known by the light of nature. Some notions of morality

\* Hobbes.

† Rom. xiii. 1, 4, 5.

‡ Ps. ciii. 20.

§ John iv. 34.



are found among those who do not enjoy the advantages of revelation; and these are accompanied with a sense of obligation; that is, there is a conviction in the minds of men that they ought to do some things, and ought not to do other things. There remain treatises on morals drawn up by the Greeks and Romans, in perusing which, while we observe many defects, we cannot but admire the progress which they had made in the investigation of the various classes of relative duties. It is evident too, that conscience performed its office among them, not only from particular instances of its power in disquieting and alarming certain distinguished transgressors, but from express references to it, and their recorded declarations, that some actions were pleasing, and others were offensive to the gods. *Mens sibi conscia recti*, was a good conscience, and *convictus conscientia*, was a man condemned by his own mind. This is expressed by the apostle Paul in the following words: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."\*

To Christians the rule of conscience is the word of God, in which his will is fully and clearly expressed. It is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," and is able to make us "perfect, and thoroughly to furnish us for every good work."† To those who enjoy it, reason is only necessary to enable them to understand the propositions contained in it, to collect together the precepts which are scattered here and there, and to apply them to the various cases which occur in the progress of life. Sometimes the Scriptures enter into detail; but had they attempted to point out all the minutiae of duty, they would have swelled to such a size as would have defeated their design, because few could have found leisure to peruse them, and still fewer would have been accurately acquainted with their multifarious contents. In studying them, therefore, with a view to the direction of conscience, it is necessary to attend to such particulars as the following. They sometimes content themselves with laying down principles, and leave it to us to deduce the consequences. They forbid the species, in forbidding the genus under which it is included. Thus, when they condemn injustice in general, they condemn its endless modifications. At other times, by condemning one species, they condemn all the other species which are comprehended under the same genus. The prohibition of adultery in the seventh commandment, extends to every kind of uncleanness. When an external action is commanded or forbidden, the law is applicable to the disposition or principle from which it proceeds. When alms are enjoined, charity or love to our neighbour is required; and hatred is prohibited when it is said, "Thou shalt not kill." When a duty is prescribed, the means of performing it are also prescribed; and when a sin is forbidden, every thing leading to that sin is also forbidden. In a word, when the Scriptures condemn a particular vice, they recommend the opposite virtue; and *vice versa*, when they recommend a particular virtue, they condemn the opposite vice. Thus, there is no sin which the word of God does not condemn, and no duty which it does not enjoin, in one or other of these ways. There are, indeed, few sins or duties which it does not specify with more or less particularity, by express precepts, by threatenings, by promises, by exhortations, by commendations, or by examples. It is therefore a perfect rule. There are no deficiencies which the doctrines and commandments of men might supply. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the

\* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

† 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.”\*

After this account of the Scriptures, the general truth of which has not been disputed among Protestants, you will be surprised to be told that they are not an adequate rule of conscience. So bishop Sanderson asserts, in his celebrated treatise *De Obligatione Conscientiæ*; and I know not how many others. The word, adequate, signifies in English, and in Latin from which it is derived, *equal, proportioned*, and conveys the idea of something fully adapted to its end. It therefore sounds strangely in our ears to affirm, that the Scriptures are not an adequate rule, and we are curious to learn the reasons. The first is, that an adequate rule supersedes the necessity of any other; but there is another rule, namely, the light of nature, which is a law to the heathens. According to this wonderful reasoning, no system of rules, however perfect, can be adequate to direct us in practising an art, if there should happen to be another system, although greatly inferior to it. Perhaps this writer affixed a new and unusual meaning to the term, or rather, he seems to have confounded two words which are totally distinct—*only* and *adequate*. It is not true that the Scriptures are the *only* rule of conscience, because those “who have not the written law, are a law to themselves;” but it is true that they are an *adequate* rule, because they contain a perfect revelation of the will of God respecting our duty. Another reason is taken from the design of the Scriptures, which is to make us wise unto salvation; to direct us to spiritual ends; to excite us to perform those things which nature dictates, from the higher principles of love to God, and faith in Christ; whereas the office of conscience, it is said, is to consider actions, not as spiritual, but as moral; and to inquire, not whether they are performed from charity, and to a spiritual end, but whether they are good or evil, lawful or unlawful. From the latter part of this argument, it would appear that conscience has to do with our actions, but not with our motives, than which nothing is more manifestly false; and the former part of it, although brought forward with an opposite design, actually proves that the Scriptures are an adequate rule, because they carry morality to the greatest possible perfection. It is unnecessary to attend to his other reasons, as you are, I presume, satisfied with the specimen which you have heard. It will naturally occur to you, that there must have been some cause which led a man esteemed wise and learned, to argue so inconclusively; and he has not been at pains to conceal it. If the Scriptures are the adequate rule of conscience, it will follow, that nothing is binding upon conscience which is not expressly or virtually enjoined in them. But this limitation would not have answered the purposes of his Church, which claims authority to decree rites and ceremonies in religion. If the Scriptures are an adequate, and consequently the only rule of conscience to those who enjoy them, these decrees will not be binding; but, if you can contrive to show that the Scriptures are sufficient only for certain ends, and that there are other things for which a different rule is wanted, you may succeed in subjecting Christians to the doctrines and commandments of men. Thus even great men, under the influence of prejudice and self-interest, do not regulate their opinions by the Scriptures, but pervert and misrepresent them to favour their opinions. And thus, even among Protestants there remains not a little of the spirit of Popery; for the steps which make way for the admission of the authority of the Church to enjoin any thing as necessary in

\* Ps. xix. 7—11,



religion, which God has not commanded, led by degrees to the establishment of the antichristian system, under which the traditions of the fathers, the decrees of councils, and the bulls of the Popes, were exalted to a level with the commands of Christ and his apostles.

The word of God is a rule, and, to speak properly, the only rule of conscience to Christians; other rules, which are obligatory, deriving all their authority from it. To this rule we are bound to yield unhesitating obedience; and when we comply with its duties, we do what is acceptable to God. But here a question arises, Whether the commands of conscience are binding, not only when it is enlightened by the Scriptures, but when it errs, and calls good evil, and evil good? This point requires to be treated with great caution; but, however strange it may at first appear, we do not see how we can come to any other conclusion but this, that men ought to act according to its dictates at all times, when there is no doubt or suspense in their minds; if the case is not clear, it is evident that they should wait till, by the due use of means, they have ascertained what is their duty. If conscience should pronounce any thing to be a sin which is not a sin, they ought to abstain, because they do not know the judgment to be erroneous, and would not be guiltless if they should act in opposition to it. The reason is, that supposing, as they do, the voice of conscience to be the voice of God, they could not transgress its orders, without expressly rebelling against what appeared to them to be the authority of God. "I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean."\* The apostle is speaking of an action which was not sinful in itself, and yet he declares that it was sinful to the man whose conscience pronounced it to be such. The judgment of conscience does not change the nature of actions, but it changes them to us; because the authority of God seems to us to be interposed either to command or to forbid. In the case to which Paul referred, the sin did not consist properly in the action itself, but in doing it in the persuasion that it was sinful. The judgment of conscience may be false, but we think it true; and in disregarding it, we disregard the Lord of conscience.

The observation, that the judgment of conscience does not change the nature of actions, paves the way for the resolution of the question, whether the general obligation to obey the dictates of conscience, will exculpate us, when the action which conscience enjoins is in itself unlawful. Conscience, let it be remembered, is only a subordinate rule, to which we are properly under a moral obligation to yield obedience, only when it is conformable to the supreme rule; and the obligation of which we speak, results solely from the supposition of its conformity. It is not, as has been said, *regula regulans*, but *regula regulata*. An appeal may be always made from its decisions to the word of God; and as soon as a difference is discovered between its dictates and those of Scripture, the sentence which it has pronounced is made void. Hence it is plain, that the plea of conscience will not avail to exempt us from guilt and punishment. And this, we may observe, is the unhappy situation of those whose consciences are not duly enlightened, that they sin whatever they do, in disregarding the voice of conscience and in obeying it; a consideration which should excite every man to use the greatest diligence to ascertain what is his duty, and to pray for the Divine Spirit, who is promised to lead us into all truth. If I have made use of the word, obligation, in the present case, from the remarks connected with it there is no danger of mistaking its import. It does not, and cannot mean, that an erring conscience will justify us in doing what is morally wrong. The law of God is immutable. Our views

\* Rom. xiv. 14.

of it may be incorrect; but no man would suppose, in any similar case, that misapprehension of the law could exempt a transgressor from the penalty. Paul, before his conversion, "verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus," being persuaded that Jesus was an impostor, and his disciples were apostates from the true religion. What he did, he did from conscience; yet he declares that he was a "blasphemer, a persecutor, and an injurious person," who needed forgiveness, and was pardoned only through the mercy of God.\*

There are persons to whom what has now been said would appear highly objectionable. What, they would ask, should a man act according to the dictates of an erring conscience? No; he ought to disobey it, and to regulate his conduct by the law of God. There are, however, some sayings which have an imposing sound, but when they come to be examined, are found to have little or no meaning, and this, I apprehend, is one of them. Those who have it most frequently in their mouths, it is to be presumed have never considered it. If they have any meaning, which is questionable, it must be this, that, if a man knows that his conscience is in an error, he ought not to obey it. But here they have no antagonists, and the case supposed is impossible, because, as soon as the error is discovered, it is corrected. To suppose a man's conscience to prescribe to him any action, after he knows it to be wrong, is absurd. What else do they mean? Is it that a man ought not to obey his conscience, although he believes its dictates to be right? What is this, but entirely to subvert its authority? No; they will reply, we only assert that it should not be obeyed when it is contrary to the law of God. But, in the mean time, we are persuaded that it is agreeable to the law, and yet we are told that we should pay no respect to its commands. We entertain no doubt, and yet should refrain from acting. We believe that God is speaking to us, but should sit still and fold our hands, because, in reality, he is not speaking, and we have mistaken another voice for his. But, if this reasoning, which is in reality devoid of meaning, be admitted, I am at a loss to conceive in what case we should obey conscience; for we never can be more sure of our duty than we at present are, although we may be sure on better grounds. The conviction, however, is the same, and must therefore either bind, or leave us at liberty in both cases.

Upon the whole, it appears that "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in every thing contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith and worship."† Such is the doctrine of our Confession of Faith, and of sound reason; for nothing can be sin or duty, with which alone conscience is concerned, but what is such in virtue of the law of the moral Governor of the universe. It may be questioned, whether the Confession is consistent with itself, when it ascribes to the civil magistrate a power "to call to account, and proceed against those who publish opinions contrary to the known principles of Christianity,"§ and "to take order that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God be duly settled, administered, and observed."|| These passages would require an ample commentary; but, in the close of this lecture, I have only time to remark, that a power is given to the magistrate to restrain and punish not only crimes against the peace of society, but opinions contrary to the truth, that is, to what he conceives to be the truth. What then can be plainer, than that he is constituted Lord of the consciences of his subjects? It belongs to him to tell them what they should believe and profess. If it be said

\* Acts xxvi. 9.

§ Conf. chap. xx. §. 4.

† Tim. i. 13.

|| Ib. chap. xxiii. §. 3.

‡ Conf. chap. xx. §. 2.



that he is to exercise this power according to the word of God, I answer, that it is according to the word interpreted by himself and his advisers; and consequently, their dogmas are the rule of our faith. If it be said again, that he does not interfere with conscience itself, but with our profession and practice, I answer, in the first place, that he cannot interfere directly with conscience itself, which, being an internal principle, is beyond his reach, and we owe him no thanks for not doing what is impossible; and, in the second place, that, to interfere with our profession is to interfere with conscience, because conscience calls us to avow what we believe to be true, and to act conformably to it; and this he will not allow. Such is a specimen of the shuffling methods by which it has been attempted to defend the Confession of Faith against the charge of contradicting itself, and taking away with the one hand what it has given with the other. I must add, however, that while the Church of Scotland holds the Confession, without explanation, the Church to which we belong has cleared herself from this inconsistency, by expunging from her creed every expression which imports the power of using compulsory measures in religion. We can honestly maintain, that God alone is Lord of the conscience, while we hold that our faith, and worship, and obedience, are to be regulated, not by the decrees of councils, and the edicts of magistrates, but by the supreme and infallible standard of Scripture.

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## LECTURE LXXVIII.

### ON CONSCIENCE; PEACE OF CONSCIENCE; AND SPIRITUAL JOY.

*Different States in which Conscience may Exist—Peace of Conscience, distinguished from mere Security, founded on Justification, and proportioned to the growth of Sanctification—Spiritual Joy: its sources; means of securing it.*

My remarks upon conscience have extended farther than I expected, and I am therefore under the necessity of resuming the subject in this lecture, as there are several things not yet noticed, which are worthy of attention. Conscience is essentially the same in all men; but, like our other faculties, it exists in different states, and under a variety of modifications. I shall proceed to point out the distinctions which are commonly mentioned.

First, Conscience is distinguished into antecedent and consequent. Antecedent conscience is this faculty exercising its office in reference to actions to be performed, and pronouncing them to be lawful or unlawful. In this view, it is called a light within us, a law engraven on the heart, an impression made by the hand of God. Consequent conscience is the faculty exercising its office in reference to actions when they are past. It then pronounces them to be good or bad, worthy of praise or of blame, of reward or of punishment. In this view it is called an accuser, a witness, a judge. The design of the two epithets is to specify the two provinces assigned to conscience in the soul of man; namely, to warn him against sin, and excite him to his duty; and to approve of him or condemn him, according as he has regarded or disregarded its voice.

Secondly, Conscience is distinguished into enlightened or right, and erring. A right or enlightened conscience is properly instructed in the nature and extent of our duty, and its judgments are conformable to truth. I need hardly

remark, that the source of the light which shines in it, is the Word of God. An erring conscience is mistaken in its judgments, and calls good evil and evil good. We have an example of an erring conscience in Paul before his conversion, who, "verily thought," or whose conscience dictated to him, that he should oppose the religion and persecute the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth; and an example also in all the unbelieving Jews, who had "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."\* The errors of conscience arise from ignorance of Scripture, from misapprehension of its meaning, from the adoption of human opinions as the standard of conduct, and from the influence of the appetites and passions, by which the understanding is blinded and perverted. To this subject the following words of our Saviour refer: "If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"† The light which is in us, is conscience; and if it be darkened by error, our condition is truly pitiable, as we shall then wander into devious paths, and at the same time proceed with the greatest confidence, being fully persuaded that it is directing us aright.

In the third place, Conscience is distinguished into firm or assured, and doubting. By the former, we understand a conscience which has a clear perception of duty, and is embarrassed with no difficulties respecting the decision to which it ought to come. We have seen, indeed, that an erring conscience may be fully assured, and it often happens that men are never more confident than when they are egregiously wrong; but we are speaking at present of a conscience which proceeds upon the footing of clear, unquestionable evidence. There is no room for doubt, whether we should sanctify the Sabbath, obey our parents, pay our just debts, and relieve the necessities of the poor. But occasions occur when the mind has nothing to guide its decisions but conjectures and probabilities; occasions, when the equality of the reasons on both sides of a question leaves it in a state of suspense; occasions, when the arguments on one side preponderate, but some little difficulty, to which greater importance is attached than it deserves, hinders the mind from coming to a satisfactory conclusion. In all these cases, conscience is subject to doubt, more or less strong, according to the degree of the evidence for and against. And here I may take notice of what is called a scrupulous conscience, or a conscience which is in constant perplexity, making objections to every thing, startling at shadows, suspecting evil in what is perfectly innocent, and never able to decide whether what it does is lawful or unlawful. It arises from weakness of intellect, from melancholy of temperament, from gloomy ideas of religion, from the spirit of superstition, from the prejudices of education which have established an arbitrary standard of morality, and from associating with the timid and narrow-minded. It is a cause of torment to the person himself, and a plague to those around him, who are perpetually in danger of offending him, and upon whose liberty he is incessantly endeavouring to encroach.

In the fourth place, Conscience may be distinguished into timid and delicate. These terms are sometimes confounded, but they convey different ideas. A timid conscience is easily alarmed, acts with hesitation, and is full of suspicions that there is something wrong in our actions. It must therefore disquiet the bosom in which it resides. A delicate, or tender conscience, is not a troublesome inmate, but a vigilant guide amidst the snares and dangers of life. It is feelingly alive to the calls of duty, and recoils even from the appearance of evil. It shrinks with instinctive sensibility from the touch of pollution. It is like a polished surface, on which the slightest breath is seen; it is like the eye, which is hurt by a mote, and makes an instantaneous effort to eject it. Tenderness of conscience does not resemble the soreness of a diseased part, but the nice discrimination of those organs which are most amply

\* Acts xxvi. 9. Rom. x. 2.

† Matt. vi. 23.



furnished with nerves. It is easily distinguishable from a scrupulous conscience; for they are real sins by which the former is offended, whereas those which the latter dreads are imaginary. This often strains at a gnat, and swallows a camel; but a tender conscience holds sin in abhorrence, when it presents itself in its most specious forms. Such was the conscience of the Psalmist, when he hated every false and wicked way, and esteemed God's precepts concerning all things to be right.\*

In the fifth place, Conscience may be distinguished into awakened and hardened. When we speak of an awakened conscience, the epithet supposes it to have been previously asleep, and such is its state in a great part of mankind. I do not mean that its powers are absolutely dormant, for there are few who are not occasionally at least admonished and reproved by it; but that in general it does not perform its office with firmness and fidelity, but leaves the sinner in a great measure ignorant of his own character. It is said to be awakened, when it is roused, by the word of God or the dispensations of Providence, to the faithful performance of its duty; when it not only remonstrates against our present sins, but recalls the past to remembrance; when it accuses and condemns the guilty man, and anticipates the ratification of its sentences at the tribunal of God. A hardened conscience is without feeling. It has lost its power through a long course of transgression, so that it opposes no obstacle to the sinner, gives no warning, denounces no threatening, but permits him to do as he pleases. The mind is so blinded, that it does not perceive the difference between good and evil, or the heart is so callous, that the perception makes no impression upon it. In this state conscience is sometimes said to be cauterized, from the Greek word *καυτηριζω*, which signifies, to *brand* or *burn with a hot iron*. It is used in the First Epistle to Timothy, and is translated "seared with a hot iron,"† the metaphor being founded upon the effect of hot iron, in rendering the part of the body insensible to which it has been applied. Some, however, understand it to mean that the consciences of the persons spoken of are spotted or marked with sin, as if they had been branded. Be this as it may, the idea commonly suggested by a seared conscience is, that it has lost all feeling.

In the last place, not to multiply particulars, Conscience may be distinguished into good and bad. The first has been defined to be a conscience, the judgments of which are conformable to the standard of duty, and which approves of our conduct. The epithet, however, is sometimes used, not to express the conformity of its judgments to the standard, but simply its approbation. In this sense, although a man should be in an error, he has a good conscience when he has acted according to his ideas of duty. It is probable that Paul affixed this meaning to the term, when he said to the Jewish Council, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day,"‡ for his words seem to refer to his whole past life; and in that part of it which preceded his conversion, he could be said to have had a good conscience, only because he was then sincere, and faithfully obeyed its dictates, however erroneous. By a bad conscience is sometimes meant a conscience which judges falsely, pronouncing sin to be duty and duty to be sin, and which consequently absolves when it should condemn, and condemns when it should absolve. But at present a bad conscience signifies an accusing conscience, and it is called bad, not because its judgments are erroneous, but because it torments the sinner, and inflicts upon him the agonies of remorse. Such a conscience disquiets a man in the midst of profound external peace; it makes him tremble when there is no visible danger; it covers him with shame by his own reflections, although to all around him his guilt is unknown.

\* Ps. cxix. 128.

† 1 Tim. iv. 2.

‡ Acts xxiii. 1.

A look, which perhaps means nothing, but which he interprets as significant, quells his confidence; he is discomposed by an accidental word, which seems to glance at his secret crimes. Conscience has made many cowards.

I now proceed to speak of peace of conscience. I begin with observing, that there is a state of mind which resembles it, but ought not to be confounded with it, because it is totally different in its nature and its consequences. I mean a state of security, which excludes fear and disquietude, and may therefore be called peace, but differs from the peace which I am about to consider, as it rests upon no solid foundation, and is the effect, not of religion, but of confirmed habits of sin, and misconceptions of the character of God.

In some cases it is the effect of atheistical principles, or of principles which are equivalent to atheism. If a man has persuaded himself that there is no God, or that the Being whom we call God pays no regard to the actions of his creatures; that the soul is mortal as well as the body; and that there is no state of retribution beyond the grave; it is easy to see that this man will be exempt from the apprehensions which agitate other men, and will enjoy a kind of peace very different from the peace of religion.

Another cause of security is the power of sin, by which the voice of conscience has been silenced, and the mind fixed solely upon the business and the pleasures of the world, so that other subjects engage no share of its attention. The law of God and the future state, death and judgment, are entirely forgotten; or, if they should accidentally occur to the mind, they produce no effect, or an effect so slight, that it is instantly obliterated.

Sometimes security is the consequence of false ideas of the mercy of God; of a persuasion that he is so merciful, that he will not animadvert upon the failings of his creatures, and that, if they only pray to him now and then to forgive them, they shall undoubtedly be pardoned.

At other times, security arises from a false estimate of their own character; and this may take place in two different ways. Men may imagine that they have fulfilled the demands of the law perfectly, or at least to such an extent as is necessary to their acceptance with God. Many a self-righteous man has lived and died without fear, in the flattering thought that he had made peace with his Maker by his obedience. Of this description was the Pharisee in the parable, who "thanked God that he was not like other men." Again, men who profess to believe that we cannot be justified by works, may be secure, through the groundless persuasion that they are possessed of the faith by which an interest is obtained in the righteousness and salvation of Christ. They have faith, but it is dead while they suppose it to be living. Hence, they conclude that they are in favour with God, and have nothing to fear from the dreadful threatenings denounced against sinners.

From these causes, a great part of mankind pass their time in complete apathy, or experience only occasional misgivings of mind.

Is there no such thing as true peace of conscience? Yes; it is a precious blessing which God bestows upon his people, and which flows from the privileges formerly considered. There is a peace which Jesus Christ has bequeathed as an invaluable legacy to his disciples; there is a peace with which the God of peace "fills them in believing;"\* there is a peace which "passes all understanding, and keeps their minds and hearts through Jesus Christ;"† there is a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. It consists in an assurance that God is no longer angry with them; that he will not reckon with them for their sins; that he has freely pardoned them; that he has received them into favour; that he will protect and bless them, and give them

\* Rom. xv. 13.

† Phil. iv. 7.



eternal rest in the world to come. None can estimate the value of this blessing but those who enjoy it. It is a continual feast; it is the joy and sunshine of the soul. Although we could claim the whole world as our heritage; although its crowns of glory were ours, and its delights crowded around to minister to our wishes, without this peace we should be miserable; but it is the solace of the soul, amidst the external evils which are so much dreaded, poverty, affliction, persecution, and contempt. To him who enjoys this privilege, we may justly apply the vain boast of the poet concerning his just man, that the rage of the multitude, the threatenings of tyrants, the commotions of the elements, the fall of the world itself, could not dismay him. *Impavidum ferient ruinæ.\** With an approving conscience, and God as his friend, what has he to fear?

Peace of conscience is founded upon peace with God. Now, peace with God is inseparably connected with the blessings of justification and adoption, which, in one point of view, may be considered as the same privilege under different aspects. As we are naturally enemies to God, so he is an enemy to us, for "he is angry with the wicked every day." A reconciliation, therefore, is necessary, and it has been effected by the atonement of Christ. When the pardon of sin, and restoration to the Divine favour, which are offered in the Gospel, are humbly and thankfully received by the sinner; when he draws near to God through Jesus Christ, confessing his guilt and unworthiness, and imploring his mercy; the reconciliation of which the foundation was laid by the blood of the cross, is completed. God enters into covenant with the sinner, and assures him that "he will be no more wroth with him, nor rebuke him."

When this important fact is known to the believer, peace of mind ensues. Who shall lay any thing to his charge? Justice is appeased; the demands of the law are satisfied; God has forgiven him, and conscience has therefore no accusation to bring. The memory of his past sins is not obliterated, and when he thinks of them, he is overwhelmed with shame and sorrow; but the reflection does not alarm him. He has nothing to fear. Conscience summoned him to the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge; but there he was acquitted, and it is henceforth silent. The believer obtains this peace by the contemplation of the mercy of God, of the all-sufficient merit and prevalent intercession of Christ, and of the promises confirmed with an oath; in all which, he sees an inviolable security that he shall not "come into condemnation." He obtains it by the assistance of the Spirit, "bearing witness with his spirit that he is a son of God," forming in him the characters by which the members of the heavenly family are distinguished.

This leads me to remark, that peace of conscience is also connected with the privilege of sanctification. Although God has fully pardoned believers, and will never cast them off, yet he sometimes suspends the sense of his favour, for the chastisement of their sins. In such cases they are disquieted and distressed, as we learn from the history of the saints, David, and Asaph, and Herman, who says, "While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted."† Their guilt, which was cancelled, presents itself again; and, having lost for a time an assurance of the love of God, they experience their former fears. Hence, it appears that their peace will bear a proportion to their diligence and success in the cultivation of holiness. I do not mean that any of their good works are so perfect that conscience will find nothing to accuse; but that the more believers abound in them, the evidence will be clearer of the sincerity of their faith, and God will testify his approbation of them by manifestations of his love. This is obviously imported in the following exhortation: "Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be

\* Horat. Carm. iii. 3.

† Ps. lxxxviii. 15.

with you.”\* The apostle John teaches the same doctrine in several passages of his first Epistle, and particularly in the following words: “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not,”—that is, if it bear testimony to the sincerity of our love and obedience,—“then have we confidence toward God.”† Paul points out the connexion between holiness and peace of mind, when he says, “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.”‡

Peace of conscience flows from peace with God. It is maintained by faith in Christ, whose blood will cleanse us from our daily sins, and by a careful study to please God in doing his will. “Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.”§ This is the reward which God bestows at present upon the righteous. They find that there is profit in serving him. The heavenly calm within is a more precious recompense than outward prosperity, which smiles deceitfully, and is often followed by a storm. “The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.”||

From what has been now said, it appears that religion is not that gloomy anxious service which it is frequently conceived to be. If it imposes restraints and demands sacrifices, it compensates these by the happy state of mind which it excites. In order more fully to illustrate this point, I proceed to speak of spiritual joy, which is another native consequence of the privileges which have been considered. The Scriptures make frequent mention of it; and it is represented as distinct from peace, although closely connected with it. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement,” or reconciliation.\*\*

Joy is that delighted, elevated state of mind, which arises from the possession of present, and the anticipation of future good. Both these causes contribute to the joy of Christians.

First, They have an interest in Christ, to whom they are united by faith, as the branches are united to the vine, and the members of the body to the head. He is the source of their privileges and hopes, and hence they are sometimes represented as rejoicing in him alone. “Whom having not seen, ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”†† The state into which they have been admitted by divine grace, is safe and honourable, for they are justified by the sentence of the Supreme Judge, and sanctified by the Spirit of holiness; but they are men compassed with infirmities, carrying about with them the remains of depravity, often falling into sin, and chargeable with defects in all their duties. It seems impossible, therefore, that their minds should be tranquil and cheerful, because conscience, which in them is faithful and tender, must cause disquiet by its accusations and remonstrances. And certainly their peace would be liable to perpetual disturbance, and their joy would soon give place to sorrow, if its continuance depended upon themselves. It is their connexion with Jesus Christ, which realizes what might otherwise be pronounced to be impracticable, and accounts for what at first view appears utterly incredible,—that they who are daily offending may yet daily rejoice. The view

\* 2 Cor. xiii. 11.  
|| Is. xxxii. 17.

† 1 John iii. 18—21.  
\*\* Rom. v. 11.

‡ 2 Cor. i. 12.  
†† 1 Pet. i. 8.

§ Ps. cxix. 165.



of his atonement, as we formerly remarked, brings relief to their minds, and for the sake of their Redeemer, God continues to behold them with a pleasant countenance. No interruption takes place of the friendly intercourse between him and them; and it is maintained with ineffable kindness on his part, and with the highest delight upon theirs. When they sin, their Advocate appears for them before the throne of heaven, and pleading his own merits in their behalf, preserves the reconciliation unbroken. Looking to themselves, they find innumerable causes of fear and despondency; but looking to him, they perceive solid grounds of confidence and joy. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."\*

Secondly, Another source of the joy of believers is the relation in which God stands to them. Upon his favour the happiness of intelligent creatures obviously depends. God is the most glorious Being in the universe, in whom every possible perfection resides, all that is great and fair is assembled. The contemplation of his character, therefore, as exhibited in the Gospel, in which condescension is associated with majesty, grace to the unworthy with unspotted purity and inflexible justice;—the contemplation of a character so amiable and so august, which displays the harmony of qualities which seemed to be forever opposed, looking with a benignant aspect upon man, is calculated to awaken high emotions of admiration and delight. Accordingly, we find the saints earnestly requesting a manifestation of it, in preference to all the splendid shows and bewitching pleasures of the world. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."† How transporting the thought to believers, that this glorious Being is their own by a peculiar and intimate relation; is not only the object of their worship and love, but the inexhaustible and everlasting source of their felicity! "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him."‡ There they possess all that their hearts can desire, and more than tongue can express. "They are satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and their mouths praise him with joyful lips."§ There is no good thing which they may despair of obtaining; for the riches of his goodness are pledged to supply their wants, and the fulness of heaven itself is but a part of what he is able to bestow. Are they in solitude, forsaken by the world and by their friends? God is always near, to cheer their lonely hours with sweeter enjoyments than those of friendship and love. Do the afflictions of the present life come upon them? While they are assured that these shall not separate them from his love, they can trace the footsteps of their Father in the darkness and the tempest, and discern wisdom and goodness in apparent disorder and severity; they kiss the rod which is wielded by his gracious hand, and welcome the stripes which promote the health of their souls. As soon as a man can look upon the God of salvation as his own, and this is the privilege of those who have been admitted into a state of grace—the scenery around assumes a new aspect, and displays charms which never before met the eye. He beholds every where objects of pleasing admiration, and causes of heart-melting gratitude. Nature shines with the glory of its Maker. Mercies acquire a sweeter relish; afflictions lose half their bitterness; life rises in value, as the gift of love for purposes of infinite importance; death is divested of its terrors; the present is the seed-time of grace, and the future is the harvest of glory. In short, he enjoys God in every thing, and every thing in God.

A third source of joy to believers, who have been reconciled to God by the death of his Son, is the inhabitation of the Spirit of grace. I must not stop to

\* 1 John i. 7.

† Ps. xxvii. 4.

‡ Lam. iii. 24.

§ Ps. lxxiii. 5.

prove that the Holy Ghost dwells in their souls, but shall assume a truth acknowledged by all who are worthy to be called Christians, and illustrated in the preceding part of this Course, when we were treating of regeneration and sanctification. It is of importance to consider the character in which he is present with believers, or the office which he is appointed to perform. As a Divine Person, he inhabits the temple of the universe, and heaven and earth are sustained, and beautified, and enlivened by his influence; but he selects the souls of believers as the scene of his gracious operations. There he is present as the Spirit of truth and consolation; and it is his office to diffuse the cheering and tranquillizing light of heaven; to shed a divine serenity over the thoughts and feelings; to inspire and strengthen good principles; to elevate the affections above secular objects; to give a taste of the sweetness of spiritual things; to awaken hope, with all its blissful anticipations. To what can he be so fitly compared, as "to a well of living water, springing up to everlasting life?"\* It is our Saviour's own similitude, and is alike worthy of notice for its expressiveness and its beauty. Like a fountain which is in perpetual motion, and pours out its stream in summer and in winter, he exerts his gracious power in youth, in manhood, and in old age, to promote the growth of grace, and to give them a foretaste of celestial bliss. The joy of the Christian is therefore not only pure, but permanent. No man can take it from him. He is satisfied from himself; not from his own virtue and the resources of his own mind, as the old philosophers were wont vainly and presumptuously to boast; but from the communications of this Divine inmate in his bosom, whose presence is life, and whose favour is the sunshine of the soul. *Omnia mea mecum porto*, said one of the self-sufficient wise men of antiquity; but it was a poor stock, and he must have starved upon it without the assistance of pride. The Christian who has the Holy Ghost dwelling in his heart, can say with truth that he "carries all his treasures with him;" for whithersoever he goes, and in whatever situation he is placed, his joy remains, and is full. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."†

In connexion with this particular, I may mention, in the fourth place, the doctrines and promises of the word of God, as a source of spiritual joy; for although the operations of the Spirit are distinct from these, they are always carried on in concurrence with them. It is by his application of them to their hearts that Christians are filled with joy and peace in believing. It is from the word of God that they learn the nature and extent of the privileges which the mediation of Christ has procured for them, and the securities that they shall hold then in perpetual succession. Hence we can account for the high value which they set upon it, the interest with which they peruse its contents, and the inexpressible satisfaction which, according to their own testimony, it imparts to their minds. "More to be desired are thy testimonies than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb."‡ Let us attend to its influence in communicating joy to them in the season of affliction. Pain is as uneasy to them as to other men; they feel disappointments as severely, and are equally apt to despond and to sink under the burden of calamity. On such occasions the efficacy of the word of God is experienced. It enables believers to adopt that consoling train of reasoning which Paul pursues, in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and to infer from the death, resurrection, and intercession of Christ, not only their present justification before God, but their uninterrupted interest in his love. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or persecution, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that

\* John iv. 14.

† Rom. xiv. 17.

‡ Ps. xix. 10.



neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.\* Thus the word of God illuminates the darkest events; and faith, relying upon its assurances, keeps alive hope in circumstances which seem to justify despair, and turns the complaints and wailings of nature into songs of salvation. The people of God can rejoice in tribulation, because they know that it is sent with a benevolent design, and that it will terminate in their present and eternal good. With the staff of the promises in their hands, they fear no evil when they are pursuing their lonely journey in the valley and shadow of death. Providence sometimes speaks the language of wrath; but the word always speaks the language of love. Providence is sometimes like the stormy sky, in which neither sun nor star appears for many days; but the word is like the serene atmosphere of summer, illuminated by the solar rays, and showing on all sides agreeable objects. Hence it has been "the song of the saints in the house of their pilgrimage;" and we have their testimony, that "unless it had quickened them, they should have perished in their affliction."

The last source of spiritual joy which I shall mention, is hope, the influence of which we have all experienced. It exerts a sort of magic power, by which distant objects are brought near, and the future is made present, and we enjoy beforehand the good of which we cannot immediately obtain the actual possession. He whose bosom is animated by hope, is transported from the scene around him, to another fairer and more blissful; and, tasting its delights by anticipation, he is sometimes raised above the painful sense of his actual circumstances. If such is its effect when it is only an illusion of fancy, and at best its objects are confined to this diurnal sphere, what must be its power when it brings to bear upon the heart the surpassing glories of the world to come! The hope of the Christian conducts him by its light beyond the boundaries of time, and fixes his views and desires upon the realities of eternity. When his eye is steadily directed to heaven, and catches a glimpse of its scenes, of the magnificence of which no terrestrial splendour can furnish even a faint image, how light must the evils of life appear, and how diminutive its pleasures! We do not wonder to hear that believers rejoice, when it is added, "that they rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" a hope sufficient to warm the coldest heart, and to elevate the most depressed. This hope is founded on the righteousness of Christ, which was imputed to them when they believed. It is cherished by the Spirit of adoption, sent forth into their hearts as the earnest of the future inheritance; and it is strengthened by their progress in holiness, from which it appears that they are destined to possess that inheritance, and are now in a train of preparation for it. And hence we see to what cause it is owing that they are reconciled to a very hard lot in this world, and are content and happy in circumstances which would overwhelm others with dejection. Their minds are busy in making comparisons, not between their own condition and that of others who are more prosperous,—for such comparisons are the food and the fuel of discontent,—but between their present and their future state, between what they now suffer and what they shall hereafter enjoy. Thus the Christian is elevated in a great measure above the influence of temporal things. They affect him but little when his faith and hope are strong. 1. they are disagreeable, they are of short duration; and his prospects are so consoling and interesting, that he has neither leisure nor inclination to give himself much concern about his temporary accommodation. He who is hastening to take possession of a kingdom, will not be made unhappy by being uncomfortably lodged for a single night on the road. "I reckon that the sufferings of this

\* Rom. viii. 35—39.

present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." \*

Such are the sources of the joy of believers in Christ. We see on what grounds the Scripture pronounces them to be blessed, and can enter into the spirit of the song of praise and thanksgiving which is sung by the church: "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." †

Let not the doctrine concerning the joy which flows from faith be misunderstood. It is not meant to assert, that those who have been justified, and adopted into the family of God, always feel transports and ecstasies. No such thing is implied, even in the exhortation to "rejoice evermore;" ‡ nor would a state of perpetual rapture be consistent with their present condition, and their business in this world. If, in some happy moments, they are elevated to the mount of God, and, holding fellowship with him, lose the remembrance of sublunary things, they must again descend into the plain, and walk with men in the ordinary duties of life. For these, I think, they would be disqualified, were their minds powerfully affected at all times by bright visions of the glory of God and of heaven, and by such an overpowering sense of his love as the saints have sometimes experienced. The lively foretaste of future felicity is only occasional; and, in the usual train of life, they can expect nothing more than that tranquillity of mind, that placid frame, that calm cheerfulness and sober joy, which flow from the faith and hope of the Gospel. These may be compared to their daily food; but the former are delicacies and cordials, by which their exhausted strength is restored, and the injuries which sorrow has inflicted are repaired.

Still less should it be supposed, that Christians experience joy without interruption, because the sources of it are unfailing. Their state is always safe, but their feelings are not always comfortable. It is certain, however, that, if their joy suffers interruptions, and they live in fear, perplexity, and dejection, the fault is their own. They must co-operate with God, both by avoiding whatever would counteract his gracious designs, and by a diligent use of the means appointed to give them effect.

They must live by faith, for their peace and joy will be in proportion to it. A man would not be delighted by the most beautiful objects in nature which he did not see, nor relieved from the apprehension of want by great riches which he did not know himself to possess: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." When Paul triumphed in affliction, it was through faith: "I am *persuaded* that nothing shall separate us from the love of God." § When Asaph was dejected, unbelief was the cause: "I said, this is mine infirmity." ||

They must beware of "forsaking the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to themselves broken cisterns which can hold no water." In other words, they must beware of setting their affections upon any other than God, and of seeking happiness from any inferior source. It is their folly in doing so which is the cause of all their disquietudes. If we hold up a dark body between us and the sun, must we not be in the shade? How can they rejoice who, with their own hands, shut out joy from their souls? If we wish God to remain in his temple, and to fill it with his glory, we must not permit any rival to usurp his place, nor erect an altar for unhallowed sacrifices. When sin in any form is indulged, the most fatal consequences ensue; as we learn from the earnest

\* Rom. viii. 18.

§ Rom. viii. 38.

† Isa. xii. 1—3.

‡ Ps. lxxvii. 10.

¶ 1 Thess. v. 16.



prayer of David, after God had been provoked to withdraw a sense of his love, and was testifying his displeasure against him: "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." \*

Once more, They must be diligent, zealous, and constant in obedience, for thus the soul is maintained in a healthy vigorous state, and is capable of receiving and relishing spiritual joy: whereas by remissness, it becomes relaxed and languid. It is not to be expected that God will smile upon his disobedient children; but, to the dutiful, he will give unequivocal proofs of his approbation: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways." † Christians have always found, that when they walked with God in the exercise of faith, and the practical study of holiness, they were visited with the light of his countenance; but that darkness and distress were the never-failing consequences of the omission and careless performance of their duty.

Such are the methods by which Christians will secure to themselves the happiness which God has provided for them: "If they do these things, they shall never fall." ‡ Life will flow on in the pure tranquil pleasures of religion; and their death will come to fill up the measure of their bliss in the heavenly world, where there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain, because the former things shall have passed away.

## LECTURE LXXIX.

### ON THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

Different opinions respecting the Perseverance of the Saints.—Their total or final fall impossible.—Their perseverance inferred from the Immutable Decree and the Covenant of God, the Mediation of Christ, and the Indwelling and Offices of the Spirit.—Examination of the Passages of Scripture alleged against this Doctrine.

WE have seen, that sinners are brought into a state of favour with God through faith in Jesus Christ; and that the Holy Spirit is given to them, by whom they are sanctified, that they may serve God in this world, and may be qualified for being admitted into his immediate presence in the next. The happiness which they enjoy in consequence of these privileges is great. At peace with their Maker, they have peace in their own minds, and look forward to the future state with the anticipations of hope. There is only one thing wanting to complete their happiness, so far as it can be perfect in the present life; and that is, the certain knowledge that their present state is stable and immutable, and that those anticipations will be realized. If their interest in the salvation of Christ is secured beyond the possibility of change, they may, with the Apostle, triumphantly bid defiance to all the powers of earth and hell; if, however, they may fall from a state of grace, there is not only a call for vigilance, but ground of anxiety, and their prospect will often be darkened by fearful forebodings. The question, therefore, respecting the perseverance of the saints, is not a mere speculation, but is intimately connected with their peace and consolation; and, according as it is decided, will have a powerful influence in rendering their religion cheerful or gloomy.

\* Ps. li. 8, 11, 12.

† Is. lxiv. 5.

‡ 2 Pet. i. 10.

Upon this subject, professed Christians are divided in sentiment, as indeed they are upon almost every article of faith. The doctrine of our Church, in which, I believe, all the Reformed Churches concurred, is expressed in the following words. "They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved." \* The Church of England, which has a Calvinistic creed, although, as the great Lord Chatham said, her liturgy is Popish, and her clergy, many of them at least, are Arminian, teaches us the same doctrine in the seventeenth article. "They which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God," namely election, "be called according to God's purpose, by his Spirit working in due season; they through grace obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity."

It is well known to you all, I presume, that the followers of Arminius maintain a very different doctrine, and that this is one of the articles by which their creed is distinguished from that of the followers of Calvin. Their sentiments are thus expressed by themselves. "True believers may apostatize from the true faith, and fall into such sins as are inconsistent with true and justifying faith; nay, it is not only possible for them to do so, but it frequently comes to pass. True believers may by their own fault become guilty of great and abominable crimes, and may continue and die in the same, and consequently may finally fall into perdition." † After this authoritative statement, it may be deemed superfluous to subjoin the sentiments of an individual, but I shall quote the words of Limborch, their celebrated Professor of Theology. "We maintain that, notwithstanding divine grace, by which a believer may persevere in faith, there remains in man a power of falling away, and, therefore, that a believer may totally lose his faith and regeneration, and may continue in apostasy to the end of his life, and so eternally perish." ‡ The Remonstrants are supported in this article of their creed by Papists, for the Council of Trent has decreed that "if any person shall say that a man who has been justified, cannot lose grace, and that therefore he who falls and sins was never truly justified, he shall be accursed." §

It is granted that believers, under the influence of temptation, may commit great sins, which are highly offensive to men and provoking to God. We have two remarkable examples in Scripture. The first is David, who seduced the wife of his neighbour, and then devised the murder of her husband. The atrocity of both actions is manifest; but the latter implied deeper guilt on several accounts, and particularly because it was the result of deliberation and contrivance; and being posterior to the other, it showed that he continued for a considerable time in a state of moral insensibility. The second is Peter, who denied his Lord, and whose crime was aggravated, because it was committed although he had been forewarned; because it was repeated a second and a third time; and because it was accompanied with oaths and imprecations, in themselves profane, and which changed his false affirmation into perjury. There is no doubt, that other saints have been guilty of the same sins, or of others equally heinous. It is not to be supposed, indeed, that such cases are of frequent occurrence, because then there would be no visible difference between those who have, and those who want the grace of God. There would then be no answer to the prayer of our Saviour for the former, that his Father would keep them from the evil of the world; and to their own prayer, that he would

\* Conf. chap. xvii. §. i.

† Confession of Remonstrants, as quoted in Brandt's

History of the Reformation in the Low Countries, vol. iii. p. 89.

‡ Limborch, Theol. Lib. v. cap. lxxx.

§ Decret. De Justificatione, canon xxiii.



keep them back from presumptuous sins, and not suffer them to have dominion over them. Believers, living by faith in the Son of God from whom their strength is derived, and diligently using the appointed means, are enabled to walk in holiness and righteousness, and to be blameless, and harmless, and without rebuke. But as such cases do sometimes occur, the adversaries of the doctrine of perseverance eagerly lay hold of them as an argument against it. How could those persons, continuing saints, have acted such a part? Where was their faith, when they denied the Lord that bought them? Where was their love to God, when in the most daring manner they trampled on his law? Concerning these two examples, I would remark, before I proceed to the general argument, that, strong as they seem, they are by no means conclusive against the doctrine which I mean to establish. Great as appears to have been the insensibility of David till he was awakened by the reproof of Nathan, we cannot consider him as having totally lost all religious principle. The seed was in the ground although it gave no signs of vegetation. This may be inferred from his prayer: "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me;" \* in which it is implied, that the Spirit had not utterly withdrawn from him, although it was a punishment which he deserved and earnestly deprecated. The same remark may be made upon Peter; in whom we are assured by the prayer of our Saviour for him, that faith remained even at the time when he had renounced it in words. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." † Observe the particularity of this prayer. All the disciples were to be exposed to temptation, and no doubt our Lord interceded for them all; but he speaks of Peter alone, because he was to fall more foully than his brethren; and if the prayer was answered, his faith did not utterly fail.

We assert, then, that true believers cannot fall totally or finally from grace. It may seem that the use of both these words is unnecessary, because if they cannot fall totally, it follows that they cannot fall finally; but they are intended to oppose the doctrine of Arminians, who affirm, that although a saint may fall totally from grace, he may be restored by repentance; but that since this is uncertain, and does not always take place, he may also fall finally, and die in his sins. Now, we affirm, that the total apostacy of believers, is impossible, not in the nature of things, but by the divine constitution; and consequently, that no man who has been once received into the divine favour can be ultimately deprived of salvation.

The doctrine of our church respecting the perseverance of the saints, is supported by a variety of arguments.

First, it is proved from the decree of God concerning them, which was formerly shewn to be immutable. They were predestinated to life, and shall infallibly obtain it, if the purposes of God are not changeable like those of men, and liable to be frustrated by opposition which he did not foresee and could not prevent. But the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his will;" and the design of the economy of providence and grace is to carry his purposes into effect. Accordingly, the Scriptures exhibit a chain of events stretching from eternity to eternity, not one of the links of which can be broken. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." ‡ Predestination and eternal glory are connected by the intermediate links of vocation and justification; each follows the other in regular succession; the second is as certain as the first, the third as the second, and the fourth as the third; they are all expressed in the past time, probably to signify that, although the last is fu-

\* Ps. li. 11.

† Luke xxii. 31.

‡ Rom. viii. 30.

ture, it is as certain as if it had already taken place. Those who deny the perseverance of the saints break this chain, and affirm that the decree of predestination may prove abortive, that our calling may be made void, and that the sentence of pardon pronounced upon a believer may be revoked. But how contrary is this doctrine to the general tenor of Scripture, which proclaims the security of believers, and calls upon them to rejoice in hope of the glory of God! How contrary to these words of our Lord! "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets; and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." \* To say that the words, "if it were possible," imply only the great difficulty of the thing, because the same phrase is used in some cases when an absolute impossibility cannot be understood, is to wrest them from their natural meaning to serve a particular purpose. Our Saviour foretells a time of trial in which none should escape except the elect; but this interpretation makes him say that many should be seduced, and perhaps the elect too, but with greater difficulty. And for what purpose did he say so? It was not surely to encourage his disciples, for this view of the matter would give them no consolation, as the difficulty might be overcome, and they also might apostatize. And how does this comment agree with his own words in a preceding verse? "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened;" or with his words in the parallel passage in Luke, "But there shall not a hair of your head perish." † Why all this care of the elect, expressed by shortening the days, if still they might be deceived? And why so solemnly assure them of their preservation from bodily harm, if still they were in danger of losing their souls? Taking all the passages together, we confidently conclude, that the words under consideration import not merely a difficulty, but an absolute impossibility. And whence this impossibility arose, we are informed by another sacred writer, who tells us that the saints "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." ‡

The next argument is taken from the nature of the covenant which God has made with his people. It is not transitory, like the first covenant, but is everlasting; and hence its blessings are promised, not for a time, but for ever.—"And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." § There are two engagements in this single promise, both which God has pledged himself to fulfil. He promises not to turn away from his people to do them good; and he promises to put his fear in their hearts, that they may not depart from him. The second engagement is necessary to the fulfilment of the first. Were they to depart from God, to break off all connexion with him, and to return to the service of Satan, he could not continue to do them good, consistently with the holiness of his character; but he will preserve them in such a state that he may hold fellowship with them, without any impeachment of his honour. Let it not, in defiance of the promise itself, which makes no mention of any condition, be said that the promise is conditional; and that it is only understood that God will continue to be gracious to them, if they continue to fear him, which, however, they may cease to do. It is true, indeed, that they are fallible and changeable; but the danger to be apprehended from this quarter is effectually guarded against; for, in the new covenant, the perseverance of the saints is secured by the provision of the means. God has pledged himself to put his fear in their hearts, or to grant to them such communications of his grace as shall preserve them from falling away. To the same purport are the following words of our Saviour: "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to

\* Matth. xxiv. 24.

† 1 Pet. i. 5.

‡ Matth. xxiv. 22. Luke xxi. 18.

§ Jer. xxxii. 40.



pluck them out of my Father's hand."\* We shall more fully understand the import of these words, if we compare them with the preceding verse: "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Both taken together, contain a solemn assurance that the sheep of Christ, or those who hear his voice, and know and follow him, shall be eternally saved. Yes, say our adversaries; none can pluck them out of the hand of God, and they shall not perish through any want of power on his part; but they may withdraw themselves from his hand by their own voluntary act. Let us see, then, what is the sense of the words upon this supposition. Our Lord solemnly assures his followers, that no created power shall wrest them out of his hand, or that of his Father. It is quite evident that physical force is here out of the question, and that it could never enter into the mind of any man in his senses, that this could have any success in a struggle with Omnipotence. It is a moral power of which he must be understood to speak; by which, I mean the power of arguments, and promises, and threatenings, to induce them to apostatize from the faith. What then does he tell his disciples? He tells them, that neither man nor devil should succeed in tempting them to apostacy, unless they gave their consent; a piece of information not new nor necessary, as all his disciples, and every person of common sense, knew it before; for it is as clear as sunshine, that temptation will do us no harm, if we do not comply with it. This silly truism, it seems, is the amount of our Lord's solemn declaration, twice delivered, concerning the safety of believers. No person can draw them into apostasy unless they yield to seduction. With such downright nonsense, as we might call it did it not deserve to be branded as an impious perversion of Scripture, is the hypothesis of Arminians supported; and an attempt is made to wrest from the people of God one of the best sources of their consolation. By the same miserable expedient, they endeavour to evade the evidence of other declarations and promises which teach the perseverance of the saints. There is implied in them this condition,—that they shall obtain eternal salvation, if they are not wanting to themselves; or, in other words, the Scriptures tell us that the saints arrive at the end of their journey, if they continue to walk in the way, and do not turn aside into a by-path.

The Apostle Paul plainly teaches the perseverance of the saints, when he asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" and goes on to shew, that no change or trouble which may befall them can effect a separation: "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us."† To this subject we may also apply the following passage: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."‡

I shall now lay before you some other arguments for the perseverance of the saints, which are founded on the mediation of Christ.

The first argument is, that those for whom he laid down his life shall certainly be saved, because he has paid the full price of their redemption.—Some, indeed, tell us that the design of his death was merely to render God placable, that thus there might be no obstacle to the restoration of sinners to his favour if they should comply with the terms, and to their final salvation if they should continue faithful and obedient to the end of their lives. It is evident that the perseverance of the saints has no necessary connexion with

\* John x. 29.

† Rom. viii. 35, 37.

‡ Is. liv. 9, 10.

the hypothesis. When God was rendered placable, the design of our Saviour's death was fully accomplished, although not one individual of the human race had been actually reconciled to him. But the hypothesis is false. God was placable without any respect to the death of his Son: and of this he has assured us, by declaring that he freely loved the world, and that the mission of his Son was the consequence of this love. It amounts to the same thing to say, as others do, that Christ died for all men, or, that his death so pleased God that he has established a dispensation of grace, by which all men have an opportunity of obtaining salvation. According to this scheme, nothing is fixed with respect to individuals, and the final perdition of those who once believed does not interfere with its arrangements. The view which the Scriptures give of the design of the death of Christ is totally different. They inform us that it was a sacrifice of atonement offered for us; that our "iniquities were laid upon him," and "he bore them in his own body on the tree;" and they plainly teach the doctrine of substitution. Now, as a surety stands in the room of the person whom he represents, the latter reaps all the benefit of what the surety has done in his name; so that, if his debt has been paid by the surety, the creditor cannot demand the payment of it from him. Let us apply this illustration to the subject before us. If Christ made satisfaction on the cross for the sins of his people, not for some of them only but for them all, as we are expressly assured, it would be contrary to justice to subject them also, to the punishment. But, if the saints may fall from a state of grace, and perish in their sins, satisfaction will be twice exacted, first, from the surety, and secondly, from them. Either Christ did, or did not, make an atonement for the sins of his people. If he did not make an atonement for them, they must satisfy for themselves; if he did answer the demands of justice in their room, it is impossible that, under the righteous administration of Heaven, they should, by any cause, or for any reason, come into condemnation. Accordingly, the new covenant promises to believers complete and irrevocable pardon. I will "be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."\* But if the doctrine of the defectibility of the saints is true, the promise is false, for their sins may be remembered again. Nay, if this doctrine is true, Christ might have died in vain; for as one saint may fall from a state of grace as well as another, it might happen that not a single sinner should be actually redeemed by his blood from everlasting destruction.

The next argument is founded on the intercession of Christ. Those in whose behalf he prays that they may be preserved from evil, and may finally be brought to the place where he is, shall certainly be saved, "for him the Father hears always." Such is his prayer for his followers: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." It is obviously false to say, that this is a prayer for his immediate disciples alone, for he himself has extended it to all believers: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."† It is a manifest evasion to say, that it is a prayer solely for their preservation from afflictions and temptations; because, in the first place, if this was his prayer, it has not been answered, as his disciples, in the beginning and in all subsequent ages, have been exposed to both; and because, in the second place, we know it to be his will that they should be exposed to them for their trial and improvement. And how absurd is it to suppose, that our Lord would pray that they might be kept from such things as might give them uneasiness, and might eventually lead them into sin, but neglected to pray that they might be kept from sin itself! It is still more daring

\* Heb. viii. 12.

† John xvii. 11, 15, 20.



to say, that the perseverance of the saints does not follow from this prayer, because his prayers have not always been answered. Thus, he prayed for his murderers, many of whom persisted in unbelief. But we should distinguish between the prayers of Christ as a man, and as a Mediator. As a man, he prayed, in obedience to the law of love, for his enemies, leaving it to God to deal with them according to his sovereign pleasure. We have no reason to think that he prayed on the cross as Mediator; or, if we should take this view of it, we may be certain that his prayer was answered in the case of all to whom it extended, by the conversion of thousands of the men who with wicked hands crucified and slew him. The prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John, was evidently offered up by him in the character of the High Priest and Intercessor of the church, who, for the sake of his people, had sanctified or dedicated himself to this office. Shall our Saviour intercede in vain? Shall any of those for whom he shed his blood fall away and perish, although he has requested that their faith should not fail? No; it is impossible. "Because I live," he said, "ye shall live also." "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."\* He does not pray in the unmeaning strain of our adversaries: "Keep them from evil, if they will keep themselves; bring them to glory, if they do not stop in the way." He prays that Divine grace may be sufficient for them, and enable them to go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in the heavenly Zion.

Other arguments in support of the doctrine of perseverance are derived from the inhabitation of the Spirit. That the Holy Ghost is given to believers, is a truth so plainly taught, and so generally acknowledged, that it may at present be taken for granted. It is certain that men are in a state of grace only while they enjoy his presence, and that, if he should be taken away, they would return to a state of nature. To decide the question, therefore, respecting the perseverance of the saints, it is only necessary to ascertain whether he is a transient visitant, or a constant inmate in their souls. Let us hear, then, the words of our Lord to his disciples: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."† This is a virtual promise of the Spirit *in perpetuum*, and, consequently, an assurance to the disciples that they should be guided, and assisted, and protected by him, to the end of their lives. Here, then, is one instance, in which the perseverance of some saints was secured by supernatural grace. But perhaps our adversaries will say, that this promise respected the disciples only in their official character, and implied nothing more than that they should always enjoy the assistance of the Spirit in their apostolical labours. The whole context shows that such an interpretation is totally unfounded; but that every ground of doubt with respect to the constant inhabitation of the Spirit in believers may be removed, let me quote another passage against which the plea of particular or exclusive application cannot be alleged: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."‡ We know from other places that this water signifies the Spirit. Now, observe that he who drinks of this water shall never thirst. It is a poor, pitiful commentary on the words to say, that he shall not thirst while he is drinking, but that if he gives over using this water he shall thirst again; for this was true of the water of Jacob's well, as well as of this living water which is contrasted with it, and preferred to it. It is plainly meant that he shall never thirst, because he shall have an unfailing supply; and accordingly it is added, that "this water shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The water shall never cease, or the Spirit shall never be withdrawn, but shall continue with those to whom he has

\* John xiv. 19. Rom. viii. 34.

† John xiv. 16.

‡ John iv. 14.

been given till the work of their salvation is completed. I do not conceive it to be possible to express more explicitly the perseverance of the saints. If the Holy Spirit shall never be taken from them, then they shall never fall from a state of grace.

There are two offices assigned to the Spirit, from which we may draw the same conclusion. He is sent to seal believers, and to be the earnest of the future inheritance. They are both mentioned in the following passage: "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."\* A seal was used for different purposes;—to mark a person's property, to secure his treasures, or to authenticate a deed. In the first sense, the Spirit distinguishes believers as the peculiar people of God; in the second, he guards them as his precious jewels; in the third, he confirms or ratifies their title to salvation. And can we suppose that this work of the Spirit may be counteracted, and rendered of no effect; that those whom he has separated to God may be again confounded with the mass of sinners; that the treasures over which he watches may be scattered and lost; and that the title of the saints, although authenticated by his signature, may be reversed? With the gift of the Spirit for the purpose of sealing, the Apostle connects the idea of establishment; but according to the hypothesis of our adversaries, they are not connected, and he who has been sealed may stumble and fall. We know, however, whom it will be our wisdom to believe.—Again, the Spirit is represented as "an earnest." An earnest is a part given as a security for the future possession of the whole. The Holy Ghost is the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, because he begins that holiness in the soul which will be perfected in heaven, and imparts those joys which are foretastes of its blessedness. A work may be begun, but not finished, because the workman has desisted from a change of views, or has met with obstacles which made it impossible to proceed. Those with whom we contend are of opinion that, from the latter cause, the work of grace in the heart of man may be stopped, namely, from his waywardness and obstinacy. But if the workman has pledged himself to execute his plan, and is possessed of sufficient resources to fulfill his engagement, the work will go on, and in due time will be completed. Now, the design of representing the Spirit as an earnest, is manifestly to assure us that the work which he has begun in the soul of believers, he will "perform to the day of Jesus Christ." The designation given to him is an assurance that he will not desist. He could not be an earnest, if it might happen that those who had received him should not obtain the inheritance. To call him so in this case, would create false expectations. But, let God be true, and every man who contradicts him a liar. If he has granted his people the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts, he will not fail to bestow all the blessedness for which he has given them reason to hope. "If children, they are heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with his Son Jesus Christ."†

Some of the arguments by which our opponents support their doctrine, have been occasionally mentioned. I shall now take notice of their reasoning from certain passages of Scripture.

The first argument is founded upon the following words in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel: "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."‡ Here it is supposed, they say, that a righteous man may fall from holiness, and perish in guilt. There is an answer to this argument, which they treat with contempt as a mere evasion,

\* 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

† Rom. viii. 17.

‡ Ezek. xviii. 24.



namely, that the person here mentioned is not a saint, but a man of a good moral character, and that the life and death spoken of in the passage are of a temporal nature. It is justified, however, by the context; and whoever examines it with attention will find, that nothing is said of him which may not be affirmed of many who have a form of godliness, but have not experienced its power; and that the prophet is describing the treatment of different characters in the course of God's providential government. We grant that such a man may fall from his righteousness; while at the same time, with perfect consistency, we affirm the perseverance of the saints. But there is another answer,—that this is a hypothetical statement, the design of which is to point out the connexion, under the Divine administration, between righteousness and happiness, and between unrighteousness and misery. We have a similar statement in another place, where an Apostle says to believers, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;”<sup>\*</sup> although we know, from the principles of Paul, that he did not conceive it possible that a true saint should perish. The import of such statements is simply this, that if one thing happen another will follow. But they do not affirm the actual existence of either the one or the other. When a philosopher says, If a comet should impinge upon the earth, or come too near it, the earth would be shattered into pieces, or burnt up, or driven from its orbit,—he does not suppose or fear that his hypothetical case will be realized. What, then, it may be asked, is the use of such statements? I answer, that, while they point out the necessity of continuance in holiness to the attainment of final salvation, they are a mean of exciting believers to watchfulness, and diligence, and prayer, and thus contribute to their perseverance in grace; for God deals with them as rational creatures, and works upon them by motives addressed to their hopes and their fears.

Another argument is founded on the parable of the sower: “He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”<sup>†</sup> It is not a little surprising, that this passage should be quoted by our opponents in support of their doctrine. It speaks evidently of a man who receives the word of God and continues for a time, and then falls away; and thus far it is quite to their purpose. But unhappily for them, our Saviour gives us the reason of failure, that he has no root in himself; plainly implying that, if he had had root in himself, he would have withstood every temptation. The passage, instead of militating against our doctrine, plainly teaches the perseverance of the saints, by signifying that the cause why some do not persevere is, that they are not saints, or have not the grace of God in their hearts; for this is the only root which can preserve the plant from withering away. Our Lord distinguishes such hearers of the word from believers, when he describes the former as stony ground, and the latter as good ground. He thus points out an essential difference between them. They are not of the same species; and it is altogether illogical to conclude, that what may be affirmed of the one may also be affirmed of the other.

The next argument is deduced from these words in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away,” or, “having fallen away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame”<sup>†</sup> This passage is eagerly laid hold of by those who deny the perseverance of the saints, as decisive in their favour; for, are not the persons described manifestly possessed of the characteristic qualifications of

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. viii. 13.

<sup>†</sup> Matth. xiii. 20, 21.

<sup>‡</sup> Heb. vi. 4—6.

the saints, and yet it is supposed that they may irrecoverably apostatize. Let us examine the qualifications, and see whether they imply any thing which may not be found in the unregenerated. "They were once enlightened;" but so may all be said to be to whom the Gospel is preached, and who are acquainted with its doctrines. They have "received the knowledge of the truth," as the Apostle expresses himself in another part of this epistle; or, as Peter says, they have "known the way of righteousness."\* In this manner, the unbelieving Jews were enlightened, and for this reason their sin was highly aggravated: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."†—"They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost;" but so are all those who experience his common influences, by which they are impressed under the dispensation of the Gospel; and so were those in the primitive times who were endowed with miraculous powers, which were given to them by the Spirit. But that such persons were not all true believers, is evident from the words of our Lord to some of them: "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you."‡ He never acknowledged them as genuine disciples.—"They have tasted the good word of God;" so had the hearers in the parable of the sower, whose case we considered above, and concerning whom, it is plain that they never were possessed of saving faith, for they had no root in themselves. Concerning the other two particulars, "their partaking of the heavenly gift," and "tasting the powers of the world to come," I shall say nothing, because it is doubtful what they mean, and consequently no use can legitimately be made of them in this argument. A conjectural interpretation proves nothing. We may presume, however, from the connexion in which they appear, that they imply no higher qualifications than those which have been already considered. The passage supposes the apostasy of persons who had advanced as far, it may be, as unconverted men could advance, but were destitute of true grace, which never fails.

Another passage is in the second Epistle of Peter; but after what has been said, the solution must be so obvious, that it is unnecessary to point it out. It speaks of those who, through "the knowledge of Christ, have escaped the pollutions of the world," and "whose latter end is worse than their beginning."§ But, what were those but the temporary hearers of the Gospel of whom we have already spoken? It would require a long time, and much repetition, to follow our adversaries in their comments upon Scripture; and I shall therefore desist, as the specimen which has been given is sufficient.

They produce examples also in support of their system, as of David, Solomon, Hymeneus, Philetus, and Demas. Our answer is, that, with respect to such of them as were saints, we affirm that they might fall into great sins without losing the principle of grace; as Peter did, who retained faith, although he denied his Master; and with respect to the rest, their case has been already disposed of. The fall of mere professors of religion is nothing to the purpose.

A general argument is founded on the exhortations of Scripture, in which the saints are called to watch and labour, and work out their salvation with fear and trembling; in which exhortations it is implied, that the event is uncertain. It may be remarked that, being addressed to societies of Christians in which there was a mixture of believers and hypocrites, they were properly expressed in such a manner as to imply that the result was problematical. But, not to insist upon this answer, it ought to be considered, that the purpose of God does not supercede the use of means, nor is grace given to render our own exertions superfluous. God will certainly save those whom he has chosen, but he will save them by his word and ordinances, and by a diligent improvement of opportunities and privileges. If this is the instituted

\* Heb. x. 26. 2 Pet. ii. 21. † John xv. 22. ‡ Matth. vii. 23. § Pet. ii. 20.



plan of effecting his purpose, exhortations and admonitions do not necessarily imply the uncertainty of the issue, but merely point out the manner and order in which the design will be accomplished. A man will not die before the appointed time, and yet there is no inconsistency in telling him, that unless he avoid dangers, and take food and medicine, he cannot live. His knowledge that upon such conditions life depends, leads him to use those precautions by which the number of his days is completed, and the Divine purpose respecting him is executed. Believers are not merely passive subjects of Divine grace, but God works in them and by them, and requires that they should do their part while he is doing his.

It is objected, that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is unfavourable to the interests of holiness. But how it can have this effect, it is not easy to perceive. It is perseverance in holiness which we maintain; or, in other words, we maintain that believers will persevere in holiness to the end; and it will require, I presume, more discernment than any of you possesses, to discover the tendency of this opinion to make men fall into sin. Our doctrine holds out no hope of final salvation to those who are living in sin. No man can have this hope unless he is walking in the way of God. It is another doctrine which is unfavourable to holiness, namely, that men shall be saved if they have once believed, although they live as they please. The objection has no relation to the genuine doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, and is altogether unworthy of notice.

## LECTURE LXXX.

### ON THE DEATH OF THE SAINTS, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Reason why Death befalls Believers.—Its effect upon them.—The Survivance of the Soul.—Its Immortality deduced from its Immateriality, the Nature of its Powers, the anticipations of Conscience, the present irregular distribution of Good and Evil, and from Universal Belief.

“HE that endureth to the end shall be saved.”\* That every genuine believer shall thus endure, we have endeavoured to prove by a variety of arguments from Scripture; and are persuaded that although temporary professors of religion may apostatize, and the most flattering hopes may be disappointed, yet, wherever the work of grace has been begun, it will be carried on and completed. The salvation which is reserved for believers at the end of their course, comprehends the perfection and felicity of the whole man, of soul and body. I proceed to consider the subject in its several parts, and shall speak, in the first place, of the death of the saints and its consequences.

“It is appointed unto men once to die.”† The sentence of death was pronounced upon Adam after the fall, and his posterity were included in it, because he was their federal head. Accordingly, “death has passed upon all men, because all have sinned;” and that it is not their personal sin which is the cause of their mortality, is evident from the fact of which the Scriptures take notice, that “death reigned from Adam to Moses,” and we may add, reigns to this hour, “over them who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression;”‡ that is, over infants who are not capable of actual disobedience. Some affirm that death was natural to man, or that he was mortal by the constitution of his nature, and that it is therefore no proof of original guilt. But,

\* Matth. x. 22.

† Heb. ix. 27.

‡ Rom. v. 12, 14.

besides that this objection has been already considered, and that there is no necessity to discuss it again, it is almost superfluous labour at any time to enter into an elaborate refutation of an opinion, which does not even possess the slightest degree of plausibility, as it directly contradicts the most explicit and solemn declarations of Scripture.

It cannot therefore excite surprise, that all men are subject to the law of mortality, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the young and the old. We are ignorant of the reasons for which some are cut off as soon as they see the light, while others arrive at extreme old age, and men fall at every period of life; but we are in no uncertainty with respect to the cause of the general doom. Death is the execution of the righteous sentence, appointing the sinful inhabitants of this earth to return to the dust from which they were taken. The guilty are brought forward according to the will of the Supreme Judge, to suffer in their order the penalty of the law. Melancholy as is the spectacle of a race of rational beings, wasted by disease, and swallowed up by the grave, we can account for it consistently with the goodness of the Creator, because their fate is not an arbitrary exercise of his power, but is demanded by his justice. He has no pleasure in the mere destruction of his creatures, and would neither effect it by his own agency, nor permit it to be effected by second causes, if it were not required by the law of his moral administration.

Thus far all is plain; but when we proceed to observe, that from the law of mortality even the righteous are not exempted, the question arises, how we shall account for the indiscriminate execution of the sentence? For the righteous an atonement has been made, by which their guilt was expiated; and consequently it might be presumed that they would be delivered from all the effects of the curse. How, then, comes it to pass that they are subject to death, which is acknowledged to be the penalty of sin?

Great as this difficulty may seem, it is not the only one which occurs in the history of the saints. It is not, indeed, a solution of one difficulty, to point out others connected with the subject of inquiry; but they suggest to us, that if notwithstanding these, we could quietly retain our belief, we should not allow it to be disturbed by an additional objection, which in itself is not more formidable. If we ask, why believers undergo temporal death, although Christ has atoned for their sins? may we not with equal reason ask, why they are not completely delivered from the pollution of sin as well as from its guilt, as soon as they believe? Why does it remain in them to taint their duties, and to impede their consolation? Why are they still exposed to the malignity of Satan? Why are they compelled to carry a heavy burden of affliction? These things are as inconsistent with our notions of the effect of a perfect expiation of sin, as their subjection to temporal death; for it would seem to us, that, as soon as the benefit of the atonement is applied to them, they should not only be restored to the favour of God, but completely relieved from every evil, physical and moral.

But this is not the only instance, in which our notions of what is just and fit are found not to accord with the Divine dispensations. It is certain that, if justice required, when an atonement had been made for sin, that the guilty should be fully pardoned, thus far its demands are satisfied. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;"\* and consequently, we are sure that whatever may be the proceedings of Providence towards them, they are not to be considered as effects or indications of wrath. God, in stipulating with his Son the remission of those for whom he was to shed his blood, might make a reservation of some of the temporal consequences of sin, for reasons worthy of his wisdom. To these he might judge it expedient to subject them, but with a merciful design; and, with this exception, might promise to exempt them from the operation of the penalty, as a man may stipulate with the repre-

\* Rom. viii. 1.



sentative of another, with respect to the time and the degree in which the expected benefit shall be conferred.

The procedure of God towards the saint has been compared to the manner of proceeding under the ceremonial law, in reference to a house infected with leprosy. "The priest shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place."\* In like manner God destroys the earthly house of our tabernacle, which is polluted with sin, and commands it to be carried to the grave. It has been remarked too, that under the ancient economy earthen vessels which had been defiled were broken, but those which were formed of a more solid or a more precious substance, were only washed with water, or purified by fire. Our souls are vessels of gold, and for this reason, although polluted, he does not destroy them, but he reduces our sinful bodies to dust. These, however, are merely illustrations, and I believe fanciful illustrations, of the fact, and they give us no assistance in discovering the reasons of it.

The death of the body is sometimes represented as necessary to the complete sanctification of the soul. To do so, however, is to commit the mistake of confounding the conjunction of two events with the relation of cause and effect. We acknowledge that the saints are not made perfect in holiness till they die; but although God has established a connexion between these two things, there is no reason to think that it is a necessary connexion. It does not follow, because he usually produces a certain effect in a particular way, that he could not produce it in a different way. What should hinder him from sanctifying believers wholly in the present life? You say, perhaps, that the present constitution of the body is an obstacle. It would not be easy, however, to explain this point satisfactorily or intelligibly; to show that, great as is the influence of the body upon the mind, almighty grace could not fully counteract it, so far as it is unfriendly to holiness. But, supposing that there is something in the present state of the body which renders perfect holiness unattainable, we may ask again, what should hinder God from now effecting such a change as would fit the body for co-operating with the soul in its purest exercises? That the separation of the soul from the body, and the dissolution of the latter in the grave, are not necessary to the complete purification of the soul, is evident from the cases of those who were translated to heaven without undergoing temporal death. There have been only two who enjoyed this privilege, Enoch and Elijah; but two examples establish the conclusion as fully as a thousand would do. They show, that it is not from any necessary connexion between the death of the body and the perfection of the soul, that believers are not exempted from the former. This position is farther corroborated by what we know will take place at the second coming of Christ. "Behold, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."† It is commonly said, that although some of the saints shall not die, they will undergo a change equivalent to death. I suspect that these are words without any distinct meaning; but if they do mean any thing, it is this, that upon those saints the same effect will be produced by the immediate power of God, which is produced upon the saints at present by temporal death. But this is to give up the point; it is to acknowledge that men may be fully sanctified without undergoing dissolution, for such will be the fact with respect to the last generation of the saints.

These remarks are intended to show you, that we are not able properly to assign the reason why the sentence of temporal death is not revoked in favour of the righteous. It has been said, that the design is to inspire them with abhorrence of sin, which is followed by such fatal effects; to keep them humble,

\* Lev. xiv. 45.

† 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

and to give them an opportunity to display their faith, and patience, and hope. Without inquiring whether these purposes are sufficient to account for the fact, we remark that there is one thing which, if it should not solve the difficulty, will at least show that an end is accomplished which is in unison with the general tenor of the moral administration of God. In the present state, we must walk by faith and not by sight, or, in other words, we are to be regulated in the choice and practice of religion, not by the evidence of sense, but by the evidence of testimony. It is not given to us to see the realities of the world to come; to have ocular demonstration of the glorious reward of piety, and the terrible punishment of ungodliness. Although these are subjects of infinite importance, and our whole conduct should be influenced by them, all our knowledge comes through the medium of revelation. This, as some would say, places us in a state of trial. We are put to the test, whether we will repose such confidence in the word of God, as to enter upon that course of conduct, with all its privations and difficulties, which he has assured us will lead to a happy result. What is said on this subject would require to be guarded and qualified; and therefore, laying it aside for the present, I observe, that it appears to be the will of God, that faith should be our guide in the pilgrimage of life. But it would be subversive of this design to give an open and regular declaration in favour of the good, and against the bad, in the dispensations of Providence. Were it known, exactly, who are the objects of the love, and who of the hatred of God, that is, were it known in any other way than by the testimony of Scripture, the province of faith would be greatly circumscribed, and we should then see, what we are now called to believe. Had the righteous been exempted from temporal death, it would have been known to all who they were, and that their piety was recompensed, when they were openly translated to heaven. No person could have doubted of a future state, when he saw his acquaintances and neighbours removed to it; or have called in question the truth and advantages of religion, when he was himself a witness of the performance of its promises. Hence we perceive the reason, why God has admitted into his plan the temporal death of those who are interested in the atonement of his Son. It is to preserve the consistency of his administration, to exclude any thing which would have broken in upon its uniformity, and defeated its design. He leaves them apparently in the same situation with other men. Like them they are afflicted, and like them they die.

But, although one event happens to all, there is a great difference between the death of a righteous, and that of a wicked man; a difference not in the nature of the event considered as a physical fact, but in its design and its consequences. In the case of the saint, it terminates, as we shall afterwards more fully see, his long and painful struggle with sin, and completes his restoration to the image of God, which has been carrying on, since the hour of his conversion, by the ordinances of religion and the dispensations of Providence. It closes also the scene of his sorrows; it releases the weary sufferer, and dismisses him to rest; it removes the veil which conceals the glories of the eternal world; it breaks down the partition-wall which separated him from his God. This moment he feels the agonies of expiring nature, or is lying in a state of insensibility; the next, he is full of life, and joy, and activity. We behold an heir of glory entering upon the possession of his inheritance; and death, which appears so dreadful to the by-stander, is to him the gate of life. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."\* Often his latter end is peace in respect of his own feelings. His body may suffer pain, but his mind is tranquil, for he knows in whom he has believed, and is assured that he is able to keep the trust which he has committed to him. He is parting with those who have long been dear to him in the bonds

\* Ps. xxxvii. 37.



of nature and friendship; but he is going home to his Father, and to the family of the first-born; and he leaves the objects of his affection to the care of Him who has led him all his life, and will take them under his protection. Natural affection remains in the bosom of a good man to the last, for it is the work of God, and his grace has refined and strengthened it; but he is actuated by a higher principle of heavenly love, and his soul longs for the enjoyment of his God: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth whom I desire beside thee."\* But it may happen that the Christian shall not leave the world in the full assurance of hope. Death and fears may haunt his mind, and a cloud may rest upon his closing scene; yet still his latter end is peace, because it is safe. To him death has lost its sting; for its sting was sin, but through the blood of Christ his guilt is cancelled, and will not appear against him in judgment. Through the weakness of his faith, the king of terrors may wear an alarming aspect. But he is the messenger of his Father, and comes upon an errand of mercy. Angels are waiting to receive him, and as soon as his spirit has escaped from its frail and falling tabernacle, his fears will be exchanged for everlasting triumph.

The death of the righteous is sometimes described as a sleep. This is an example of euphonism, or that figure of rhetoric by which a thing unpleasant in itself is expressed by an agreeable name. It is not peculiar to the Scriptures, but was used by heathen writers, who not only call sleep, *mortis simillima imago*, but speak of death under the notion of sleep itself:—

—ιερον ὕπνον

Κοιμάται· θνησκειν μὴ λέγει τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς.†

It is proper, however, to remark, that the metaphor is sometimes employed to denote the state of the dead, without any reference to their character, as in the following passage: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."‡ Yet the more frequent use of the term in relation to the righteous, and the connection in which it is introduced, justify us in considering it as significant of the peaceful nature of their end. Speaking of the five hundred disciples to whom our Saviour appeared after his resurrection, Paul says, "of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep."§ Luke thus describes the death of the first Christian martyr: "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge; and when he said this, he fell asleep."|| And those in general who have died in the faith, are represented as sleeping in Jesus: "Them that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him."¶ Thus the weary labourer, when evening comes, lies down upon his bed, and enjoys profound repose till the return of day.

Before I proceed to consider the state of the righteous in the grave, or the state of their bodies, I shall inquire what change takes place in their souls, and how they are disposed of. What makes death so terrible, is not simply the termination of the present life, although, even from this event, nature instinctively recoils; but the consequences in another state of being, the apprehension of a future reckoning, and of the punishment which conscience anticipates as the just recompense of our guilty deeds. When this fear is removed, death appears in a totally different light; and a man may calmly and even joyfully submit to it, if he has the hope of exchanging this frail and troubled life for a state of endless blessedness. But it is presupposed in this hope, that the soul survives the death of the body, and carries along with it, into the new region which it is appointed to inhabit, its consciousness and its capacity for happiness.

\* Ps. lxxiii. 25.

† Kallimachi Epigramm. curâ Blomfield, p. 56.

‡ Dan. xii. 2.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 6.

|| Acts vii. 60.

¶ 1 Thess. iv. 14.

It is necessary, therefore, to begin this part of the subject with the consideration of its immortality.

You all know the doubts entertained by the ancient heathens upon this subject, and especially by the learned and speculative among them. It is from them, indeed, that we know the opinion of the vulgar; but I think it probable that, as the latter felt greater reverence for the established mythology, so they were more steady in the belief of the future existence of the soul. We find that almost in every nation this belief prevails; and it is less likely to be called in question by those who do not indulge in vain reasonings, and who rest satisfied with the authority of tradition. I do not mean, that the more the subject is discussed the weaker the evidence will appear; but that, in consequence of the disadvantage under which unassisted reason labours in investigations of this kind, the result of its exertions has been rather an increase of doubt, than a settled persuasion. It is owing to this cause that the most celebrated philosophers of antiquity express themselves with hesitation, or vary their tone, using at one time the language of confidence, and at another that of uncertainty. The arguments brought forward by modern philosophers, in favour of the immortality of the soul, are better than those of their predecessors; but we shall greatly err, if we suppose that their superiority is the consequence of the gradual improvement of reason. It is true, indeed, that reason is improved; the advances, however, which it has made are not the fruits of its own unaided efforts, but of the assistance which it has derived from revelation. There can be no greater imposition attempted upon mankind, than when Christian divines, or Christian laymen, pretend to give a system of natural religion deduced from the principles of reason. What they call reason, is a compound of the natural suggestions of the mind and the truths of revelation; but they are not at pains to separate them, nor is it properly in their power, as men in general are not able to determine how much they owe to nature, and how much to education. It is sufficient to remind you, that such a system of natural religion as is now commonly exhibited, was never drawn up by a heathen. Christian countries give birth to the authors, and Christian instruction furnished them with the most valuable materials.

The first argument for the immortality of the soul is founded on its immateriality. It is not a material substance; and, as it does not consist of parts, it is not subject to dissolution. We learn by experience what are the qualities of matter, which is extended, divisible, inert; and we are led to believe that thought is not one of its properties, because we observe every where around us, that it exists without intelligence and without feeling. If thought essentially belonged to matter every part of it would think. There are only two ways in which it can be imagined to acquire the property of thinking; by a new modification of its parts, or by having the quality superadded to it. With regard to the latter hypothesis, although it has been adopted by some persons of great name, it is questionable whether they did or could affix any distinct idea to it. To endow matter with the faculty of thought, is to give it a new power, different from and contrary to all its original properties. We do not know the nature of substances, and can observe only their qualities; but, having ascertained these, we naturally conclude, that the substance to which they belong does not admit properties generically different from them. It seems to be as contrary to reason to suppose matter to be made capable of thought, as to suppose spirit to be made capable of figure and division. It avails nothing to appeal to the almighty power of God; because his power cannot work contradictions, or make a substance susceptible of qualities which do not essentially belong to it. He could change the nature of things; but while their nature continues, their properties are fixed and immutable. From all that we know of matter, it appears to be a substance on which the power



of thinking could not be superinduced. The supposition that it is superadded to matter is absurd. If, then, matter could not be the substratum of a property essentially different from all its known qualities, we are necessarily led to the conclusion that where the power of thinking exists, there is a substance, different from matter, in which it inheres, or, in other words, a soul.

This reasoning is equally conclusive against the hypothesis that thought is the result of some modification of matter. "Matter," says Dr. Johnson, "can differ from matter only in form, density, bulk, motion, and direction of motion. To which of these, however varied or combined, can consciousness be annexed? To be round or square, to be solid or fluid, to be great or little, to be moved slowly or swiftly, one way or another, are modes of material existence, all equally alien from the nature of cogitation. If matter be once without thought, it can only be made to think by some new modification; but all the modifications which it can admit are equally unconnected with cognitive powers."\*

The argument for the immortality of the soul from its immaterial nature, is thus stated by the same celebrated writer. "Immateriality seems to imply a natural power of perpetual duration as a consequence of exemption from all causes of decay; whatever perishes is destroyed by the solution of its contexture, and separation of its parts; nor can we conceive how that which has no parts, and therefore admits no solution, can be naturally corrupted or impaired.—He who made the soul can destroy it, since, however imperishable, it receives from a superior nature its power of duration. That it will not perish by any inherent cause of decay, or principle of corruption, may be shewn by philosophy; but philosophy can tell no more. That it will not be annihilated by Him that made it, we must learn from higher authority."\*

Such is the amount of the first argument. The soul may live, and will live for ever, if such be the will of the Creator.

The second argument for the immortality of the soul, is founded on its powers, which are not only different from those that we observe in matter, but are superior to the powers of all the other inhabitants of this world. Man not only perceives what is present by means of his senses, as the lower animals do, and recollects the past, but stretches his views into the future, anticipates events to come, with greater or less certainty according to the grounds of expectation, and regulates his conduct with a reference to objects which he has not seen. His mind takes a wider range than this earth, to which his bodily presence is assigned, contemplates the phenomena of nature in the remote regions of the universe, and discovers the laws by which other worlds are governed. By a process of reasoning he rises from the effect to the cause, and ascends in thought to that mysterious Being, who, himself invisible, is seen by the reflection of his glory in his works. He traces the relations in which he stands to that Being and to his fellow creatures, ascertains the duties arising from these relations, and feels that he was made for a nobler purpose than the lower animals, which are ignorant of all those truths, and have no guide but their appetites and instincts. Is it conceivable that these high powers were conferred upon him solely for a temporary use; that these lights were kindled only to enable him to look around him during the short journey of life; that after having blazed for a few years, they are to be extinguished for ever; and that the being on whose path they shed so much brightness, and to whose eye they disclosed such sublime and interesting prospects, is to lie down in everlasting darkness, and mingle with the clods of the valley? In surveying the system of created things, we do not observe in any instance such a disproportion of means to the end. The inferior animals fulfill the purpose of their existence by their senses and instincts. Why was man made

\* *Rasselas*, chap. xlviii.

capable of attaining so much knowledge, which, on the supposition that death terminates his career, is manifestly useless to him? For useless certainly is the knowledge of religious and moral truths, of his Maker, and of his duty, if there is no state beyond the grave, in which the consequences of that knowledge will be experienced, and He who is now dimly perceived in his works, shall be clearly seen and fully enjoyed. We observe too, that the powers of man are progressive, while those of the lower animals are stationary. It is not found that, among them, the species is more improved in one age than in another, or that the individual ever advances beyond a certain point. But the faculties of man are gradually unfolded from infancy to manhood, and in some cases continue vigorous and active to extreme old age. Yet we can never say that they have reached perfection, or that man has made the highest possible intellectual effort, and attained all the knowledge of which he is capable. Were the soul to die with the body, the fate of man would be an instance of an abortive work of God, a work made for no intelligible purpose; and it is therefore more consonant to our ideas of Divine wisdom to believe, that, as it is capable from its nature of perpetual duration, and its powers admit of no limit which we know, it will pass into another state of conscious existence, and advance in an interminable career of improvement. Whether the argument be considered as conclusive or not, it undoubtedly affords a strong presumption in favour of the immortality of the soul; and as such we find it brought forward by the heathen philosophers. "I am persuaded," says Cicero, in his treatise *de Senectute*, "since such is the activity of the soul, such is the memory of the past and the foresight of the future, such are its arts and sciences, and inventions, that the nature which comprehends these things cannot be mortal."

The third argument for the immortality of the soul, is founded upon the operations of conscience, the office of which is to judge of right and wrong, as the understanding judges of truth and error; to enjoin the one and forbid the other; to acquit or condemn us according to our conduct; to summon us to the higher tribunal of our Maker; and to anticipate the consequences of his sentence in another state of existence. To evade this argument, conscience has been represented as a factitious faculty, as the effect of education; and hence, it has been said, it is not uniform in its dictates, but commands and prohibits according to the notions of morality which prevail in a particular country. But the only inference which should be deduced from this fact is, that conscience is liable to be perverted as well as the understanding. If it would be absurd to deny that our minds possess the power of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, because we are subject to innumerable errors, and the wildest opinions have been believed, not only by the vulgar, but by philosophers; it would be equally absurd to conclude, that there is no such principle as conscience, because virtue has been sometimes called vice, and vice virtue. The operations of conscience, amidst the manifold errors into which it has been betrayed, are a proof that it is natural to the mind. It may be misled, but it still exists. It is found in all ages, in all nations, and under all religions; and we must therefore conclude, that it is an essential principle of our nature. It was planted in our bosom by the hand of the Creator, and its clear unbiassed dictates must be regarded as his commands. If it point to a future state, it is He who is reminding us that this is only the first and probationary stage of our being; that the consequences of our moral actions will not be limited to our present circumstances; and that, when our course is finished, a retribution will take place. In short, the anticipations of conscience, which are common to heathens and to Christians, are an evidence that the soul will pass into another state, where those anticipations will be realized.

In corroboration of this argument, I proceed to mention a fourth, which is



drawn from the unequal distribution of good and evil in the present life. That God is the moral Governor of the world, we may assume as a truth, because it has been already proved, and is denied by none but atheists. We have a witness to it within us, in the operations of conscience, which not only reminds us that he has given us a law for the regulation of our conduct, but acquits and condemns us in his name, and refers us to his future judgment for the ratification and execution of the sentence. But the present state of things, as we all acknowledge, does not accord with our ideas of a perfect moral administration. It is an ancient complaint, that "all things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath."\* The promiscuous manner in which men of different characters are treated, seems to confound all moral distinctions. But great as this disorder may be accounted, there still is a greater. "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked: again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous."† The lot of the righteous is such as that of the wicked should be, and the lot of the wicked as that of the righteous. Exceptions there are in the course of the Divine government; and righteousness is sometimes rewarded, and unrighteousness punished in the present life. But a few examples of this nature can only be set in opposition to innumerable examples of a different character, in order to show that notwithstanding the latter, there is such a principle in the Divine nature as justice, and consequently, that there is ground to expect its full development under another dispensation. It may be objected, that, although virtue and vice are not visibly recompensed, yet there is a secret retribution in the satisfaction which flows from virtue, and the uneasiness which is the consequence of vice. But, besides that the want of visibility in this retribution does not answer the ends of God's moral government, by vindicating his character and upholding the authority of his law; it may be remarked that, if a future state were left out of the question, both the pleasure and the pain would be greatly diminished, if not annihilated. Many a wicked man would feel no uneasiness, if he were freed from the forebodings of conscience; and in many cases at least, the pleasure arising from virtuous dispositions and actions would not counterbalance the evils with which they are accompanied. The state of the case then, is this, that God has given a law to the human race, and announced his intention to reward obedience, and punish disobedience; yet we find that there is no regular distribution of rewards and punishments; that there is no regular plan according to which affairs are conducted; that sometimes the righteous and the wicked are placed in the same circumstances, both enduring the evils of life, or both enjoying its good things; and that at other times, their condition exhibits an unexpected contrast, while those who should have been happy are involved in affliction, and those who should have been miserable are surrounded with earthly blessings. If we believe that there is a God, and that he is just and good, we must conclude that this life is not the whole of man; we must believe that it is only a state of discipline and trial, and that his treatment according to his desert, is with manifest propriety deferred till he have finished his course. We must believe that after death is the judgment, when he shall receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or evil. Reason assents to the doctrine of revelation, and has led men in every age and nation to expect a future state of happiness or misery. But this belief implies the immortality of the soul. It implies that it will survive the death of the body; and, in the language of an inspired writer, that when

\* Eccles. ix. 2.

† Ib. viii. 14.

“the dust returns to the earth as it was, the spirit will return to God who gave it.”\*

The last argument is derived from the universal belief of the immortality of the soul. Another argument has, indeed, been founded upon the desire of immortality which prevails among mankind; but it is questionable whether it possesses much solidity. The desire has been considered as instinctive, and consequently, as an indication by our Creator himself of our continued existence; but it does not appear to be different from the love of life, which is common to us and the inferior animals. It is simply a desire that we may not be deprived of the precious blessing of life; and we may say the same desire is virtually felt by every living creature. But because God has implanted in us a strong love of life, it does not follow, in our case more than in theirs, that our life will not come to an end.—The belief of the immortality of the soul can be traced in the history of all civilized nations, and even among savage tribes. It prevailed among the Greeks and Romans, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Persians, the Indians, and the Gauls; and wherever modern travellers have gone, and have had an opportunity to inquire into the opinions of the nations, it has been found that an idea was entertained, more or less distinct, of a state beyond the grave. “The immortality of the soul,” as Cicero said long ago, “is established by the consent of all nations.” The argument founded upon it is this:—Either this consent results from the uniform suggestions of reason, in every country and in every age, and ought therefore to be considered as the voice of God himself giving notice of our destiny; or, it is the consequence of a tradition descending from the first parents of mankind, who were taught by their Creator that their souls should never die. I acknowledge that the universality of an opinion is not, of itself, a proof of its truth, because there are some notions of religion in which men have agreed, and when without supernatural instruction, still agree, but which we know to be erroneous. But when an opinion is neither contradicted by reason nor revelation, its prevalence among nations separated by time and place, and between whom there was no communication, necessarily leads us to the hypothesis of a common origin, and demonstrates, that as it is congenial to the wishes, so it is consonant to the natural dictates of the mind. And although the maxim, *Vox populi est vox Dei*, is so far from being uniformly true that it is very frequently false, yet in the present case it may be admitted; and there seems reason to think that it was the Creator himself who taught man to believe that he is made for immortality.

## LECTURE LXXXI.

### ON THE DEATH OF THE SAINTS, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

The Doctrine of the Immortality of the soul, founded on the testimony of Christ.—Completion of Sanctification at Death.—Doctrine of an Intermediate State: of the sleep of the Soul: of Purgatory.—Arguments against Purgatory.—The best argument for it.

THE arguments for the immortality of the soul which were stated in the preceding lecture, have been considered as conclusive; and, although they do not all possess the same strength, yet their united evidence has been deemed sufficient to be the ground of a rational conviction. But I must remind you again,

\* Eccles. xii. 7.



that, although they were known in substance to the wise men of the Heathen world, they failed to give satisfaction. Let us not be surprised at this fact, and wonder that they did not clearly perceive, and confidently embrace, a truth of which the proof seems to us to be complete. Not to say that it is more fully and luminously exhibited by Christian Divines than by Heathen philosophers, I would remark, that the connection between the premises and the conclusion appears more certain to us, because we know the conclusion beforehand, and are persuaded of it on other grounds. The demonstrations of reason are brought forward in favour of a point of which we entertain no doubt, and the arguments come home to us with full force, because we are prepared to acquiesce in them. They accord with our previous sentiments, carry us forward in a train in which we have been accustomed to move, and terminate in a point which has long been the resting-place of our thoughts. But it would be folly to suppose, that the reasoning would impart the same conviction to a man who had long sought in vain for satisfaction, and, having viewed the subject on all sides, and been tossed up and down between hope and fear, had finally abandoned the expectation of arriving at certainty.

The truth is, that to Christians these arguments are not necessary, except when they are contending with such as deny revelation; and then they are of use, not to satisfy their own minds, but to prove to their opponents that, in maintaining the immortality of the soul, they are supported by reason, and that none offend against reason but those by whom the doctrine is impugned. Our faith in this fundamental article of religion does not rest upon arguments, but upon authority. The ground on which we are assured of the future existence of the soul, is the testimony of our Saviour,—one sentence from whose lips is of greater weight than all the reasonings of philosophers, whether heathen or Christian. Why should we follow a circuitous and uncertain path, when the highway is before us? or why should we light a torch, when the sun is pouring around us the full splendour of his beams?

“Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.”\* To bring any thing to light, is to draw it from its place of concealment into open day. The words now quoted may be therefore understood to import, that our Saviour was the first who discovered, or made known to the world, the doctrine of immortality; and hence the accuracy of the Apostle’s statement may be questioned, because even the heathens were in some degree acquainted with it, and the Jews unquestionably entertained the hope of a life beyond the grave. But the word, *φωτίζω*, signifies not only to *give light*, and to *make manifest*, but to *render luminous*, by shedding greater lustre upon an object already seen; and in this sense, I apprehend, it is used on this occasion by the Apostle. Jesus Christ has illuminated, or rendered plain and perspicuous, the doctrine of immortality.

He has given the most explicit assurances of the future existence of the soul. He has spoken of it as a subject which is not only probable, but absolutely certain. He has assumed it as a fact about which there could not be any question, and which those whom he addressed were understood to believe. The object which he had in view was not to prove it, but to give such information respecting it as should have a practical influence upon the minds of his followers. His aim was not properly to convince them that there is a future state, but to exhibit it as an object of hope, as the state in which his promises of perfect and eternal felicity would be performed. There is only one occasion on which we find him reasoning in support of this doctrine, namely, when he was contending with the infidel sect of the Sadducees, who denied the immortality of the soul; and even then he did not appeal to the dictates of reason, but to higher authority, the writings of Moses, which they acknowledged to be

\* 2 Tim. i. 10.

divine. It would not have become him to have spoken of it in a different manner; to have treated it as a matter of speculation; to have seemed for a moment to admit that the evidence was not complete; to have entered into a train of argumentation, as the heathen philosophers had done, and Christian Divines still do, in their treatises on Natural Theology. He was the Son of God, who had descended to the earth for the instruction of mankind; and his words were oracles. All his sayings were to be received on his own authority; and, to those who believed that he came from God, his authority was sufficient. The Lord of the invisible world was acquainted with its secrets, and a hint from him was more satisfactory than the pretended discoveries of all the wise and learned.

Now, Jesus Christ has assured us that man has a soul distinct from the body; that it is not annihilated by the stroke which lays the body in the grave; that after its separation it enters upon a new state of being; and that, as those who die in impenitence shall be plunged into darkness and misery, so his faithful followers shall be admitted into the realms of light, and enjoy there everlasting felicity. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go away, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father."\*

I have laid before you the evidence which reason can produce for the existence of the soul after death, and have shown you that, whatever force may be assigned to it, it is upon the doctrines and promises of the Gospel that the hope of Christians rests.

When we speak of the immortality of the soul in reference to believers, we mean not only the continuance of its consciousness and activity, but its existence in a state of perfection and felicity. As it is subject to imperfection and infirmity to the last hour of life, as the believer, even when he is standing on the verge of the eternal world, is still sinful as well as mortal, a change must take place immediately after its separation from the body, to qualify it for the new state into which it is introduced. This change our Church expresses by its being "made perfect in holiness;" and it proceeds upon the authority of Scripture, for the souls in heaven are called "the spirits of just men made perfect."†

There are different reasons which render the change necessary. First, Although God is pleased in the present state to hold communion with men, who are not perfect, through the mediation of his Son, yet it is his will that every stain of impurity should be removed from those who are admitted into his immediate presence. The inhabitants of the heavenly paradise must be holy, as Adam was in the garden of Eden. The image of their Maker, which was defaced by sin, must be fully restored, and shine with its original lustre, that he may again look with complacency upon the work of his hands. Were there any remains of sin in heaven, it might seem that his own purity was not absolutely perfect, and that evil might dwell with him; but the complete redemption of the objects of his love from the slightest moral taint, will demonstrate his holiness as well as his goodness. In the place where he is manifested in the full splendour of his infinite excellencies, there is not a corner which is not illuminated. "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."‡ Secondly, Unless the souls of the saints were perfectly pure, they would be unfit for the society into which they are admitted in the other world. Heaven is the original abode of the angels; but, in consequence of redemption, it is destined to be the habitation also of men,

\* John x. 23. John xiv. 2. Matth. xiii. 34, 43. † Heb. xii. 23. ‡ Rev. xxi. 27.



united in one family with angels. At present there is a connection between them, for the angels minister to the saints; but what passes is silent and unseen. It is not properly a correspondence, but a series of good offices performed by the one party to the other; and to this general intercourse the imperfection by the saints presents no obstacles. But, were the disembodied spirits of the latter to mingle with the holy spirits around the throne, while they retained the darkness, and infirmity, and irregular affections to which they were subject upon earth, we cannot conceive that the intercourse could be cordial and agreeable upon either side. The celestial spirits would be often offended, and the human spirits would be abashed and dismayed. There would be an overwhelming superiority on the one hand, and a humiliating sense of inferiority on the other. There would be wanting an entire congeniality of sentiment and feeling. It is necessary, therefore, that men should be as the angels, by possessing faculties, if not equal in strength, yet equally free from the pollution of sin, and equally prompt to engage in the sublime and fervent devotions of the heavenly sanctuary. This leads me to remark, in the third place, That, unless the souls of the saints were rendered perfectly holy at death, they could not fully enjoy the felicity of the future state. They could not enter with the whole heart into the service, and might occasionally feel a reluctance to it, when the unrenewed part of their nature shed its malignant influence upon them. Their love might at one time burn with an ardent flame, and at other times might be faint and languid. For the diversity in their state of feeling during the present life, we may, in some measure, account by the influence of the body, and we are totally incapable of conceiving the operations of the soul, when freed from this incumbrance. But, although it might be exempt from some affections which it at present experiences by means of the body, yet its temper would still be subject to fluctuation while it was actuated by two different and opposite principles, and it could not feel that fervent, sustained, undivided love to God, which is at once the duty and the felicity of every rational creature. Wherever sin exists, there cannot be pure enjoyment. Even when its influence is circumscribed, it is still a cloud which intercepts some portion of the rays of the sun, a foreign ingredient which infuses bitterness into the cup of pleasure. The saint, whose most delightful hours on earth are spent in fellowship with God, would indeed feel himself at home in heaven; but the faintest trace of sin would cause an abatement of his bliss.

The work of sanctification is completed, at the separation of the soul from the body. We have reason to think that the soul does not remain a moment longer tainted with sin. Angels carry it into the presence of God, and it appears before him in a state of unsullied purity. If to the question, how this sudden change is effected? we are not able to return an answer, there is no cause for surprise; because we are equally ignorant of the mode of its initial and progressive change in the present life. We may think that we know more about it, because we are acquainted with the means which are employed; but the truth is, that the means are the limit of our knowledge; and this will be manifest when we reflect, that there is a general application of them, an application where, in many instances, no effect is produced, and no man can perceive the reason of their success in one case, and of their failure in another. We are compelled to have recourse to a supernatural cause, the agency of the Holy Ghost, which is exerted or suspended from motives which we cannot assign. It is not from want of power that he does not perfect his work in an instant, but because he acts conformably to a plan settled by divine wisdom; and when the time comes to change the plan, he can let forth at once such a measure of his influences as shall ensure its immediate completion. In this world believers are "sanctified through the truth," that is, the power which sanctifies them is exerted by means of the truth, agreeably to the constitution of our

rational nature. The soul, on its entrance into the other world, will see God as he is, and by the contemplation of his glory, will be perfectly transformed into his image.

Perfect holiness implies, that there are no errors in the understanding, no waywardness in the will, no irregularity in the affections; that the mind is filled with light, and the heart with love; that the whole soul is such as God requires it to be, and presents a spectacle on which he can look with unqualified approbation. At present the saints cannot form a distinct idea of this state, because they have not experienced it; but they may judge of it by analogy, because they are already the subjects of the sanctifying operations of the Spirit, as we judge of any object by seeing an outline of it. The nearest approach to it is made in those moments of elevated devotion, when the Christian, abstracted from external things and absorbed in the contemplation of the Divine glory, can say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in earth whom I desire besides thee;" when the motions of sin are suspended, and he is conscious only of love, and joy, and holy desires.

I have only one remark more to make, that the perfect holiness which the soul attains at its separation from the body, is not mutable like the holiness of Adam, but fixed and permanent. The saints are made "pillars in the temple of their God, and shall go no more out." All creatures are mutable in themselves, but the power of the Creator can establish men, as it has established angels. The saints will retain freedom of will in the heavenly world, but liberty is not inconsistent with an immutable state. God is a free agent, but he cannot change; angels are free agents, but they cannot fall into sin; and the saints will be free, although their inclinations are directed to one object, and their choice is forever fixed. Such will be their love of holiness and their hatred of sin, that a transition from the one to the other will be morally impossible. Besides, in the heavenly state, they will be exposed to no temptation. There will be nothing in external objects to allure the senses, for there only righteousness dwells; and into the new paradise no seducing spirit can enter to make trial of its inhabitants. The season of trial will be past, and the state which succeeds it is a state of repose and enjoyment. The present administration of the divine government, so far as they are concerned, will then be at an end; and rewards and punishments will be finally distributed. There will be no call, therefore, for the anxious vigilance which is now indispensably necessary, for precautions are not requisite when there is no danger. They will rejoice in their perfect security, and serve God without fear.

To the doctrine which has now been laid down respecting the state of the soul after death, different theories are opposed, less or more remote from the truth, but all concurring in this general position, that the disembodied spirit does not immediately pass into its ultimate abode.

The first theory is founded upon the terms used in Scripture to express the state of the soul subsequent to temporal death, and not a little critical ingenuity has been displayed in supporting it. On the subject of the future state, a variety of terms are employed in the New Testament, as, *ἀδης*, ὁ *κόλπος* *Ἀβραάμ*, *παράδεισος*, *ταρταρος*, *γέεννα*, and *οὐρανός*. *Ἀδης*, which corresponds with the Hebrew word *הַאֵדֶם*, signifies according to its etymology, (from a privative, and *εἶδω*, to see), the *invisible state*, and is understood to be the general name of the region into which human spirits pass on leaving the body. It consists of two provinces, separated from each other by a great gulf or wide interval—ὁ *κόλπος* *Ἀβραάμ* or *παράδεισος*, and *ταρταρος*—the one the receptacle of the righteous, and the other the receptacle of the wicked. While in these receptacles, they are in an intermediate state; for when the final judgment takes place, the righteous will enter into *οὐρανός*, or *heaven*, properly so called, and the wicked into *γέεννα*, or *hell*. It is supposed, according to this theory, that



the souls of men possess consciousness and activity in this intermediate state, and experience happiness or misery; and thus far it is not at variance with the doctrine which we hold. If it farther implies, that they are not as happy or as miserable as they will be in heaven and in hell, it accords even here with the common belief, that the reward of the righteous, and the punishment of guilty souls, will not be consummated till they have been reunited to their respective bodies, and sentence have been pronounced upon them at the final judgment. All the difference seems to consist in the places assigned to them during the interval between death and the resurrection. But, in speaking of places in the invisible world, we can affix no distinct ideas to our words, as they are all equally unknown to us. The hypothesis, therefore, of an intermediate state, although it were satisfactorily established, would be no real accession to our knowledge; it would merely make us acquainted with a fact which we could not understand or apply to any practical use, and which would be to us a matter of pure speculation. This, indeed, would not be a reason for rejecting it, if it were clearly taught in the Scriptures; but, however plausible is the reasoning in favour of it, I think that it is not reconcilable to the passages which represent believers, when they die, as entering into heaven, and into the place where Christ is; and it rests in a great measure upon criticism, the value of which scholars alone can appreciate, and upon descriptions of the future state, which are confessedly figurative. I shall therefore dismiss it without farther notice.

I proceed to consider another theory, which is directly opposed to our doctrine concerning the state of the soul after death. Some modern Divines have contended that it is asleep or unconscious, and will remain so till the resurrection. It may be objected, that it is impossible to conceive a spirit to be in this state, as the idea which is always entertained of it is, that it is a living, thinking, active substance; and that its separation from the body, instead of being an argument for its insensibility, as if it could not act without bodily organs, is rather an argument against it; because, being no longer fettered and impeded by a substance dull and inert, it is at full liberty to exert its native energies, as smothered fire breaks out into a flame, when it obtains a free communication with the atmosphere. To such reasoning they reply, by appealing to passages of Scripture which appear to favour their hypothesis, and quote those which speak of the dead as asleep, as knowing nothing, as incapable of praising God, and lying in darkness and silence.

The first answer is, that such language is to be considered as figurative, and may be explained by metaphor and synecdoche. When the dead are said to be asleep, a metaphor is used, founded upon the striking resemblance between death and sleep, which is called by the poet, *mortis simillima imago*; and, at the same time, in this as in other instances, by another trope, a part is spoken of as the whole. The dead are said to sleep, and to be unconscious and inactive, because these things are true of their bodies. It is worthy of attention, that similar language has been adopted by other nations besides the Jews, and is in common use among us, although we believe, as well as they did, that souls are active in the invisible state. We should think that the man reasoned very inconclusively, who, when he heard us saying of the dead, that they are ignorant of all that is passing on the earth, that they are motionless and without feeling, and are no longer capable of good or evil, inferred, that we supposed, either that their souls had died with their bodies, or that their faculties were dormant and their consciousness was gone. Every man would perceive, in this case, the folly of making common language, founded as it evidently is upon appearances, the standard of our philosophical or metaphysical opinions. It is equally improper to interpret thus the language of Scripture, which adopts

on this occasion the style of common conversation, as it is acknowledged to do in speaking of the apparent motion of the sun around the earth.

The second answer to the conclusion drawn from the passages cited above, is, that to understand them as importing the insensibility of the soul in its separate state, is contrary to other passages in which its conscious existence is most explicitly affirmed. When Stephen said with his dying breath, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,"\* he manifestly supposed that his soul should immediately pass into the presence of his Saviour. Our Lord's promise to the penitent thief, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise,"† implies, if words have any meaning, that ere that day was finished, his soul should be in the same place with the soul of Christ, and should enjoy the blessedness which the word "paradise" suggests. In the fifth chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul proceeds upon the supposition, that believers, as soon as they leave this world, enter upon a happier state: "For we know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."‡ The one event immediately follows the other,—the entrance into the heavenly house, the removal from the earthly. The same thing is implied when he says, that he was "in a strait betwixt two," whether to remain upon earth, or "to depart and to be with Christ, which was far better,"§ Certainly he believed, that as soon as he departed he should be with Christ, as is clear both from the words themselves, and from his strait; for, if he had known that he was to remain in a state of insensibility for thousands of years, he could not have hesitated, for a moment, whether it would be better to sink into that state, or to continue in life, engaged in the most important services, and enjoying the delights of communion with God. To evade this argument, a distinction is made between absolute and relative time; the former meaning time considered in itself, independently of human perceptions; the latter, time as perceived by us. In respect of absolute time, it is granted that the saints are not with Christ as soon as they depart from this world; but they are so in respect of relative time, for however long the interval may be, they are not conscious of it, and it will seem to them but a moment. "But does the Apostle," to adopt the words of Dr. Campbell, "any where give a hint that this is his meaning? or is it what any man would naturally discover from his words? That it is exceedingly remote from the common use of language, I believe hardly any of those who favour this scheme will be partial enough to deny. Did the sacred penmen then mean to put a cheat upon the world, and by the help of an equivocal expression, to flatter men with the hope of entering, the moment they expire, on a state of felicity, when in fact they knew that it would be many ages before it would take place? But, were the hypothesis about the extinction of the mind between death and the resurrection well founded, the apparent coincidence they speak of is not so clear as they seem to think it. For my part, I cannot regard it as an axiom, and I never heard of any who attempted to demonstrate it. To me it appears merely a corollary from Mr. Locke's doctrine, which derives our conceptions of time from the succession of our ideas; which, whether true or false, is a doctrine to be found only among certain philosophers, and which, we may reasonably believe, never came into the heads of those to whom the Gospel in the apostolic age was announced."||

The distinction between absolute and relative time is totally inapplicable to the following words: "We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."¶ He had said before, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord."¶ I do not conceive it possible to express, in a

\* Acts vii. 59.

† Luke xxiii. 43.

‡ Verse 1.

§ Phil. i. 23.

|| Campbell on the Gospels, Diss. vi. part ii. §. 23.

¶ 2 Cor. v. 8. & 6.



clearer manner, the immediate transition of the soul from its present habitation into the presence of Christ. What detains us from his presence, is our continuance in the body ; what introduces us into it, is our departure from the body. Our absence from the body, and our presence with him, are closely connected ; the latter succeeds the former without any interval. Would it have ever entered into the mind of any person of common sense, if there had been no theory to support, that, after all, hundreds and thousands of years might intervene ? and would the Apostle have said, with any regard to truth, that, when "absent from the body, we should be present with the Lord," if he had believed that the soul, in a state of separation, is insensible, and does not recover its consciousness till it is reunited to the body, and consequently can then only be with Christ ? It is evident to every reader, that the doctrine which he lays down in this passage, is exactly the reverse of the theory which we are combating.

On the whole, the Scriptures proceed on the supposition, that, as soul and body are distinct, the former is capable of happiness or misery in a separate state. The story of the rich man and Lazarus is a proof of it. So are those passages which speak of the spirits of just men as made perfect ; of the souls of the martyrs as alive ; and of the departed saints as assembled in heaven, and engaged in the worship of God. Parables and prophetic visions are not to be literally interpreted ; but the substance of them must be true, that is to say, the general instructions which they convey must be conformable to fact, or they would be no better than fables. It is unnecessary to trouble you with any more quotations, as, I presume, you are all satisfied that the hypothesis of the sleep of the soul is a wild fancy, founded on a misapprehension of some passages of Scripture, and directly contrary to its most explicit declarations. I have only to add, that some of the passages to which we have appealed, are equally conclusive against an intermediate state, as they teach the immediate entrance of the soul into the place where Christ now is, which all will acknowledge, is the heaven of heavens ; for he ascended far above "all heavens, that he might fill all things."

We come now to the last hypothesis respecting the state of departed souls. It is the doctrine of the Church of Rome, that the saints do not immediately pass into glory, but first go into a place called purgatory, where they are purified by fire from the stains of sin, which had not been washed out during the present life. This doctrine, Protestants affirm, was unknown to the Church till the days of Gregory the Great, as he is called, about the end of the sixth, or the beginning of the seventh century ; but the way seems to have been prepared for it by certain opinions, which prevailed prior to that period, as we learn from the writings of the Fathers. A strange notion was entertained by some respecting the fire which will burn up the earth and its works ; that all should pass through it, that it would completely purify the bodies of those who were to be glorified, and that the more holy any person had been, he should feel the less pain from this process. With regard to the souls of the righteous, they believed, that they were in a place of rest and enjoyment, but that they should not be admitted to the beatific vision till the resurrection was past. Hence arose the practice of praying for the dead. Conceiving that they had not yet attained full felicity, the ancients thought that they might be benefited by their prayers, which would procure to them a greater degree of enjoyment. You will observe that, although these opinions were fit materials for fancy and superstition to work up into a still more extravagant form, they were widely different from the doctrine afterwards established by the Church of Rome as an article of faith.

The prototype of the doctrine of Papists on this subject is to be found in heathenism, from which they have borrowed their cumbersome apparatus of

ceremonies, and many of their religious opinions. The existence of a purgatory is plainly taught in the writings of both poets and philosophers. In the sixth book of the *Æneid*, Anchises explains to his son, who had visited him in the Shades, the process which souls were doomed to undergo, before they could be admitted into the Elysian fields, that they might be freed from the stains of sin which adhered to them at death :

“Ergo exercentur pœnis, veterumque malorum  
Supplicia expendunt.”\*

Some, he says, are stretched out to the winds ; others are purified by being plunged into an immense whirlpool or lake ; and others are subjected to the operation of fire—

“Infectum scelus exurit igni.”†

In his dialogue entitled *Phædo*, Plato informs us that when men enter into the invisible state, they are judged. Those who are neither truly virtuous, nor consummately wicked, are carried away to the Acherusian lake, where, having suffered the punishment of their unjust deeds, they are dismissed, and then receive the reward of their good actions. Those who, on account of the greatness of their sins, are incurable, are cast into Tartarus, from which they shall never escape. Those who have committed curable sins—*ιασιμα ἀμαρτηματα*—and have repented, must also fall into Tartarus, but after a certain period they will be delivered from it.

In both these passages, we have a very exact description of the Popish purgatory ; and, as there is no trace of it in the Bible, we conclude that this is the source from which it has been derived. The resemblance will appear more striking, if you reflect that, in both cases, it rests precisely upon the same foundation, the curable and incurable sins of Plato answering exactly to the venial and mortal sins of Papists. By mortal sins, they understand those which alienate men entirely from God, and are worthy of eternal death ; and they may be compared to those bodily wounds which, by their own nature, cause the destruction of life. Venial sins do not turn away the sinner altogether from God, although they impede his approach to him ; and they may be expiated, because their nature is so light that they do not exclude a person from grace, or render him an enemy to God. Mortal sins are few, if I rightly remember, only seven, and even these are so explained away by their casuists, the most unblushingly profligate that the world ever saw, that the number is still farther reduced, and scarcely one is left upon the list. All other sins are venial, or pardonable ; or, in the language of Plato, *ἀμαρτηματα ιασιμα*. They are expiated partly by penances in this life, and partly by the pains of purgatory, the place appointed for completing the atonement.

Another distinction has been contrived by the Church of Rome, with a view to support its doctrine concerning satisfaction for sin in the future state. The pardon of sin we understand to consist in the full remission of guilt or of the obligation to punishment, so that to the pardoned man there is no condemnation ; but they take a different view. They affirm that there are two kinds of guilt, *reatus culpæ*, the guilt of the fault, and *reatus pœnæ*, the guilt of the punishment. The former is remitted, and the latter is retained ; or in other words, the penitent sinner is absolved from the sentence of eternal death, but is still subject to temporal punishment. Thus speaks the Council of Trent : “If any man shall say, that after justification the fault is so remitted to a penitent sinner, or the guilt of eternal punishment is so blotted out, that there remains no guilt of temporal punishment to be endured, in this life or in the

\* *Æneid*. vi. 739, 740.

† *Ib.* 743.



future life in purgatory, before he can be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. let him be accursed.”\* Now, Purgatory has been fited up as a great penitentiary, into which the half-pardoned culprits are sent, that they may undergo the painful but wholesome discipline, by which they will be qualified for full restoration to the favour of God.

The notion of purgatory is so gross and palpably false, that the common sense of every man would reject it, where it is not perverted and overpowered by authority and prejudice. Can a person have any idea in his mind, when he talks of souls being purified by fire? Might he not, with equal propriety, speak of a spirit being nourished with bread and wine? The soul is supposed to be a material substance, (upon which alone fire can act,) contrary to the belief even of the abettors of purgatory, who admit, as well as we, the spirituality of its essence. This single remark is sufficient. The whole fabric tumbles to the ground. Purgatory, as explained by the followers of Antichrist, is physically impossible.

It is unnecessary to enter into a minute refutation of an opinion which refutes itself, and is at variance with the dictates of reason as well as of revelation. It were easy to show that it is subversive of the atonement of Christ, of the doctrine of justification by faith, of the peace, and consolation, and hope of the people of God. The testimonies from Scripture, which have been already produced to prove that the souls of believers immediately pass into the presence of Christ, are all arguments against the purgatory of Papists. Yet, as those who profess to be Christians find it necessary, or at least expedient, to have some appearance of support from Scripture, they allege certain quotations from it, the sound of which seems to favour their sentiments.

They appeal, for example, to the words of our Lord concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost, that “it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come;”† from which it is inferred, that some sins are forgiven in the world to come. It is, however, a little hazardous to build a theory upon the slender foundation of a solitary expression, especially when it admits of a different interpretation. Our Lord may be conceived to have adopted the current language of the Jews, who called their own state, the present world, and that under the Messiah, the world to come; and in this view he asserts, that the sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven under any dispensation of religion. It is plain that his design is to assert the unpardonable nature of the sin; and for this purpose he uses a phraseology which excluded all hope, as we say, that a thing will not be done either now or hereafter. It shall never be done.

Another passage, which is brought forward to support the notion of purgatory, is in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, where the Apostle, speaking of the different superstructures which men might erect upon the true foundation, says, “Every man’s work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.” “If any man’s work shall be burnt he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”‡ But nothing more can be gained from this passage in favour of the doctrine than an empty sound. This fire is for trial; the fire of purgatory is for punishment. This fire tries the works of men; the fire of purgatory purifies their persons. This fire tries all works whether good or bad; the fire of purgatory is kindled only for the latter. It is a figurative description of the effects of divine judgments, in sweeping away the false opinions which even good men may hold and publish in connexion with the great truths of the gospel; or, of the future judgment, when every work shall be made manifest, and some of the views and practices even of genuine believers, into which, although they hold Christ the head, they were betrayed through ignorance and prejudice, will be disapproved, although they themselves

\* De Justificatione, Canon. xxx. † Matth. xii. 32. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 13, 15.

shall receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. The fire will consume the wood, hay, and stubble, but will not touch their persons. Other passages which are referred to are still less to the purpose.

The best argument for purgatory is the immense gain which it brings to the worthless church that patronizes it. The satisfaction of Jesus Christ, and the surplus satisfaction of the saints who suffered more than their sins deserved, are dealt out by the Pope and his underlings for the benefit of the living and the dead. But, although freely they have received, they are not disposed freely to give. They, no doubt, think it reasonable, that a treasure so precious should not be thrown away, and that, if souls are to be relieved from excruciating sufferings, their friends on earth should pay for so valuable a favour. Great efficacy is ascribed to masses and prayers said for them; but if there are no wages, there will be no work. The miserable beings in prison may remain there, and be tormented for ever, for aught that the vicar of Christ and his servants will do in their behalf, if there is not a more powerful motive than charity. Great sums of money have therefore been given, and rich endowments have been founded, to secure the prayers and masses of the priests; and such was their influence in past ages, that, if the civil power had not arrested their progress, they would have engrossed the greater part of the property of Christendom. The delusion was supported by a train of false miracles, and visions, and revelations, with which the legends of the Church of Rome are filled, and which one does not know, whether to despise for their silliness, or to abhor for their impiety.

## LECTURE LXXXII.

### ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

State of the Body after Death.—The Resurrection.—Proofs of it.—Believed by the Jews.—Universality of the Resurrection.—Identity of our Present and Future Bodies.—Resurrection, the work of Divine Power.—Connexion between the Resurrection of Christ and that of the Saints.—The Nature of the Bodies of the Saints.—Opinion respecting a Partial Resurrection.

WE have seen that all must die, the righteous as well as the wicked, for the grave is the house appointed for all living. Confining our attention to the former, we have inquired what becomes of their souls; and it has appeared, that as, being distinct from the body, they survive their separation from it, so they neither sink into sleep, nor enter into an intermediate state, but are made perfect in holiness, and immediately pass into heaven. Besides the explicit assurances which are contained in the Scriptures, we are led to this conclusion by the consideration, that the sleep of a disembodied spirit is inconceivable; that the purgation of it by fire is physically impossible; and that to suppose a process of expiatory discipline, is derogatory to the perfection of the atonement of Christ.

The next subject of inquiry is the state of the body after death. It may seem sufficient to say, that it is committed to the grave, in which it putrefies, and after a certain time is reduced to dust. This is the popular view of the subject; and as the language commonly used is founded upon the words of Scripture, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,"\* so it is sufficiently accurate for ordinary purposes. It is certain that all that is earthy in the

\* Gen. iii. 19.



human body is reduced to earth; but this is only an inconsiderable part of it. It is a vulgar error to suppose that the body is a solid mass of matter. On being subjected to an analysis, it is found to be a compound of different substances; and, when the air involved in it is extricated, and the fluids are evaporated, the residuum is much less than is commonly imagined. It is enough to have adverted to this subject in passing. At death, the body is committed to the grave, or is disposed of in some other way; and what of man is mortal persists to our apprehension.

When speaking of the death of the saints, the Scriptures say that they "die in the Lord," and "sleep in Jesus;"\* and from these expressions it has been inferred, that, as there subsisted an intimate relation between him and them during life, the union is not dissolved by the separation of the two constituent parts of their nature. As the relation extended to their whole persons, to the body as well as to the soul, it is supposed to continue in reference to both. There is no difficulty in conceiving the continuance of the union of the soul, because it is still animated by the Spirit of Christ; but it is not so easy to understand the union of a piece of dead matter, of a heap of dust, of particles scattered hither and thither, to the living Saviour in heaven. Yet the notion is manifestly favoured by the expressions formerly quoted, and, perhaps too, by the assertion in another place, that the bodies of believers are "the temples of the Holy Ghost."† If they once belonged to Christ, they do not cease in their new state to be a part of his property. He claims them as his own, because he shed his blood to redeem them: they are a part of his mystical body, the church, which is made up not of separate spirits, but of human beings; and they are therefore objects of his care, at the time when they most seem to be forsaken. It is a wonderful thought, that what to us is so disgusting that we cannot bear to look upon it, what is so worthless that we care not perhaps where it is laid, or to what use it is applied, what is confounded with the common earth, and accounted the vilest of all things, should be precious in the eyes of that great Being who looks upon ten thousand worlds as nothing!

To the bodies of believers, the grave is a place of rest. So far, indeed, as this rest implies exemption from toil, and pain, and weariness, it is equally so to the bodies of the wicked. Both have lain down, like the traveller at the end of his journey, and the hireling when he has fulfilled his day. In calling the grave a place of rest to the righteous, we unconsciously associate with the state of their bodies that of their souls, which are truly at rest in the peaceful abode of heaven; or we anticipate the result, when, awakened as from a long refreshing sleep, they shall rise with renovated life and vigour, to enjoy everlasting felicity.

"Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."‡ In these words, death is presented to Daniel under the emblem of a state of repose; and, at the same time, he is cheered with the hope of a happier lot, which will succeed at a distant period. Having considered at some length the death of the righteous and its consequences, we are led, in the next place, to speak of their resurrection.

I begin with remarking, That the resurrection of the body is a matter of pure revelation. Reason does not suggest it; or rather, to reason it seems incredible; and to those who have no other teacher, it is unknown, or when proposed, is rejected by them. Two or three passages, indeed have been found in the writings of heathens, from which it appears that some of them had an idea of a resurrection; but their knowledge must have been derived from revelation, incidentally or in the channel of tradition, and their belief was confined to themselves. With a few exceptions, the wise men among the Gentiles were either ignorant of the resurrection, or derided it. In the dialogue of

\* Rev. xiv. 13. 1 Thess. iv. 14.

† 1 Cor. vi. 19.

‡ Dan. xii. 13.

Minucius Felix which is entitled Octavius, Cæcilius, who personates a heathen, reproaches the Christians with contriving *aniles fabulas, old wives' fables*. "They tell us," he says, "that they shall be reproduced after death and the ashes of the funeral pile; and believe their own lies, so that you might think that they had already revived. O twofold madness! to denounce destruction to the heaven and the stars, which we leave as we found them, but to promise eternity to themselves, when dead and extinguished!" When Paul in Athens spoke of the resurrection of the dead, some of the philosophers mocked.\* In the church of Corinth, there were persons who, influenced by their original opinions, affirmed that there was no resurrection of the dead;† and, in the second Epistle to Timothy, mention is made of Hymeneus and Philetus, who affirmed that the resurrection was already past;‡ that is, finding that the doctrine was explicitly taught by the Gospel, and that they could not retain the Christian name if they should flatly deny it, they explained it away, as expressive only of a resurrection from a state of ignorance and sin.

Since the resurrection of the dead has been made known by revelation, it has been attempted to establish it by the principles of reason; and an argument has been founded on the justice of God, which requires, that as men have obeyed or disobeyed him in their whole person, so, in their whole person they should be rewarded or punished. And it does seem agreeable to justice, that the body, which in this life is associated with the soul in all its actions, should share in its future recompense. But, whatever force there may be in this argument to us, who already believe the point which it is intended to prove, there is no reason to think that it would have led any man to the conclusion, who had no other means of arriving at it. Without revelation, our ideas of Divine justice would have been very imperfect. We could not have ascertained exactly what were its demands; nor do I see that reason could have objected if it had been said, that justice would be satisfied with the infliction of such punishment as the soul was capable of enduring in a separate state. The argument ascribed to the ancient philosopher Phocylides, one of the few who are understood to have entertained the idea of a resurrection, seems to be better: "It is not good that the admirable harmony which appears in the constitution of men, should be entirely dissolved. We hope, therefore, that the remains of the dead will come forth from the earth, and return to the light." What views led him to this observation, I cannot tell; but it may be turned into an argument from the wisdom of God, who it is not to be supposed will destroy a species of creatures, after having been induced by sufficient reasons to create it. Were the body of man to remain for ever in the grave, the human species would be destroyed; for there would be then no specific difference, that we know of, between men and angels, both being pure spirits unconnected with matter. That peculiar race, which united the visible and invisible worlds, was allied to earth by one part of its nature and to heaven by another, would disappear, and a link in the chain of being would be broken. We might conceive God to annihilate a species, in the exercise of his sovereignty, or in the exercise of his justice; but we could not so easily conceive him to change a species, or, in translating the inhabitants of this globe to a higher region, to retain only one half of their original nature, and consign the other to the unconscious elements for ever. What, it might be asked, could be the reason for this change? Why did he give them bodies, and then take them away? I do not know that this argument, as I have now stated it, has been attended to before, nor do I affirm that it has any force. It is, however, fully as convincing as the argument from the justice of God; but it does not amount to demonstration, and, at the best, can afford only a degree of probability.

There are some analogies in the natural world, by which the subject has

\* Acts xvii. 32.

† 1 Cor. xv.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18.



been illustrated; but they are merely illustrations, and prove nothing. The revival of all things at the return of spring, is one of the most common as well as the most beautiful. Trees, and shrubs, and herbs, and flowers, which seemed to be dead, and some of which lay hidden in the earth like the body in the grave, burst forth with new life, and delight our senses with their verdure and their fragrance. But the analogy fails in the most important point. They were not dead; there was merely a suspension of their functions; but from the body in the grave the vital principle has totally departed, and its very texture is dissolved. To make the similitude perfect, we should see an instance of the reviviscence of a plant, torn from its bed, deprived of its roots, reduced to ashes by fire, or consumed by air and moisture. On such a plant Spring would shed its genial influences in vain.

There is a supposed fact in natural history, which, being credited by the early Christians, and not by them alone, but even by wise men among the Gentiles, was frequently appealed to as a proof or illustration of the resurrection of the body. It is the story of the phoenix, and is thus related in his Epistle to the Corinthians by Clement, the first Christian in whose writings it occurs. "Let us contemplate the wonderful sign which takes place in the eastern regions, namely, in Arabia. It is the bird called the phoenix, and being the only one of its species, it lives five hundred years. When it is about to die, it prepares a place for itself of frankincense and myrrh, and other aromatic substances, and entering into it at the appointed time, expires. The flesh being corrupted, a worm is produced, which, being nourished by the moisture of the dead animal, pushes forth wings, and growing strong carries away the nest containing the bones of its predecessor, and places it upon the altar of the sun in Heliopolis, and then departs. Can it then seem wonderful that the Maker of all things should raise those who have served him in holiness and faith?"

The point which I have been hitherto endeavouring to establish is, that the resurrection of the body is a fact which unassisted reason could not discover, and of which the natural world can furnish only some images or similitudes. It is so clearly revealed in the New Testament, that it is unnecessary to refer to particular passages; and I shall therefore at present mention only a few from the Old Testament, to show that it was known before the advent of our Saviour. The following words of Job have been the subject of much discussion; but the circumstances in which they were spoken, the solemnity of the introduction, and the elevated tone of the language, evidently point to something greater than a temporal deliverance. "Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."\* It is plainly taught in these words of Isaiah: "He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces;" and again, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."† I shall add only one passage more, from the prophecies of Daniel. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."‡ A strange notion has been broached, that the Jews were ignorant of a future state, because there is no express mention of it in the law of Moses. But, our Lord has proved it and the resurrection of the body from the words of God prior to the giving of the law, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;"§ and we see that

\* Job xix. 23—27. † Is. xxv. 8. xxvi. 19. ‡ Dan. xii. 2. § Matth. xxii. 32.

it is plainly foretold in their subsequent sacred books. In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is affirmed, that it was the hope of it which supported the martyrs for the Jewish religion. "And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection."\* While the writer may be understood to refer to all the holy men who laid down their lives for the law, he had probably in his eye the sufferers under Antiochus Epiphanes, and particularly a mother and her seven sons; of whom it is related in the second book of the Maccabees, that they endured the most cruel torments with patience, and died in the assured hope of a glorious immortality. "Thou, like a fury," said one of the sons, "takest us out of this present life, but the King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life."†

Reason confirms the dictates of revelation by reminding us, that the power of God is able to execute the purposes of his will. "Why should it seem an incredible thing that God should raise the dead?" is a question which may put to silence all infidel objectors. As the event does not imply a contradiction, it is possible, and may therefore be effected by that power to which no limits can be assigned. He who made all things out of nothing, can unquestionably restore any portion of matter to the form and organization which he gave it at first. If he fashioned the human body out of the dust, it would be absurd to suppose that there is any greater difficulty in raising it from the dust again. To hesitate for a moment about the possibility of an event which God has signified his intention to accomplish, because we do not understand how it can be effected, is a proof of atheism, or, at least, of stupidity, for it proceeds upon an assumption, which, to say nothing of its impiety, is unworthy of a being possessed of any portion of reason, that the weakness of creatures is the measure of the strength of the Creator.

A question has been proposed, whether the Scriptures teach a universal resurrection, or the resurrection only of the righteous? I do not know that any in modern times have confined it to the righteous, but some of the followers of Socinus. Dr. Macknight adopted the strange opinion, that the bodies of the wicked will be destroyed in the general conflagration; but he believed that they would be previously raised from the grave.‡ The notion of a partial resurrection has been triumphantly refuted; but this was an easy task, as there was no occasion for elaborate argumentation, and nothing more was necessary than to appeal to the explicit declarations of Scripture. Some heresies have an air of plausibility, by which they may impose upon the unwary; and a regard to the honour of the truth, and the souls of men, requires that we should enter into a formal confutation of them. But, when certain corruptors of the truth have the audacity to give the lie to the testimony of God, delivered in terms which are free from ambiguity, and are the plainest which it is possible to use, it is quite sufficient to return a simple negative to their unfounded affirmations, or to treat them with silent contempt. If Paul had hope towards God, that there would be a resurrection, "both of the just and of the unjust;"§ and if our Saviour has told us, that "all that are in their graves shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation;"|| we may surely give ourselves very little concern about what any follower of Socinus may say to the contrary.

The question, whether the dead will be raised with the same bodies which were laid in the grave, or with different bodies, would not have occurred to a plain, simple-minded man, who was disposed implicitly to receive the testimony of God. It has arisen from the propensity of the human mind to speculate about every thing, and to philosophize where we ought to believe. It has been asked at those who assert the resurrection of the same body, whether they

\* Heb. xi. 35.    † 2 Mac. vii. 9.    ‡ Macknight on the Epistles, 1 Thess. iv. 16.  
§ Acts xxiv. 15.    || John v. 29.



mean the body which died, or the body at any former period, as it is known to be in a perpetual flux, and few of the particles which belonged to it in youth remain in old age? It has been asked, whether, as all those particles equally belonged to the individual, they are all to be restored to him, or only a part, and, in the latter supposition, what part? Now, although we cannot return a satisfactory answer to such questions, our ignorance is not a reason why we should entertain any doubt of the identity of the body; because we have received assurances of the fact, and should be content, as we must be in many other cases, with this general knowledge, while the mode and circumstances are enveloped in mystery. The very word, resurrection, and the corresponding term *αναστασις*, both signify the rising or standing up of something which had fallen or lain down; and if it is a different body from their present with which men will hereafter be clothed, a word has been chosen by the inspired writers which conveys a fallacious idea. This single argument, I think, is conclusive. The formation of a different body for the separate spirit would not be a resurrection but a creation,—in the secondary sense of the term, if it was formed out of pre-existing materials. In corroboration of this argument, I observe, that the sameness of the body is implied in the reasonings of Paul in the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. Some, indeed, have drawn the contrary conclusion from his words: “That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.”\* But his meaning will be obvious, if you reflect upon his design, which is to show, that the bodies of the saints, of whom alone he is speaking, will undergo a great and glorious change, and will not be the same as they now are in respect of their qualities, as the plant which rises from the earth is different from the bare grain, the homely-looking seed from which it springs. It is a physical fact, that the plant is not different from the seed, as the new bodies are supposed to be from the old; for, it is derived from the seed, and contains a part of its substance; and the Apostle himself proceeds upon this idea, when he says, “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die;”† plainly supposing, that that which is quickened is the same substance which died; and consequently, that the body of the saints, at the resurrection, is the same body which underwent putrefaction. He expresses his meaning in the clearest manner, when he afterwards contrasts the present and the future state of the body; for he assumes it as a fact, that it is the same material substance which is now corruptible, mean, and weak, but is afterwards to be incorruptible, glorious, and powerful; and he sums up his discourse by saying, “This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”‡

It has been said that the resurrection of the same body is not necessary; for, although the new body is not numerically the same, “the body is truly raised, because, what is raised being united to the soul, there will arise in the man thus completed, a consciousness of his identity, by which he will be sensible of the justice of the recompense rendered to him for his deeds.” The consciousness of identity, as far as it respects the soul, is never suspended, and remains while it is in a separate state. What, then, is this new consciousness which is to arise when it is again embodied? If it mean any thing, it must mean a consciousness of identity in the whole person, and, consequently, a consciousness of what is not true; for, if the consciousness refers to the soul alone, it does not begin at the resurrection, and the word “arise” is used merely to impose upon us, and to make us believe that this new body, although totally different, will somehow be considered as the same with the former body. With regard to the idea, that this consciousness of identity is sufficient for all

\* 1 Cor. xv. 37, 38.

† Ib. 36.

‡ Ib. 53.

the ends of justice, the question is not, whether it is true or false, but whether God our judge will account it sufficient; and if he has declared his intention to raise the same body to be rewarded or punished, speculations about what might have been are not worthy of notice.

Against the resurrection of the same body, it is objected, that the bodies of men often enter into the composition of other substances; that they not only serve for the nutrition of vegetables, and are the food of carnivorous animals, but that they are occasionally devoured by cannibals, and converted into a part of their bodies. It is easy to conceive them to be reclaimed from animals and vegetables; but what shall be done in those cases in which the same particles happen to belong to different men?—Two things are supposed in this objection. First, that all the particles which have ever belonged to an individual will be united in the composition of his future body; and secondly, that a part of the substance of one man may become part of the substance of another. It is evident that, if the first supposition is true, the second is false; and that, if the second is true, the first is false; but we cannot affirm any thing certainly concerning either. The objection is addressed to our ignorance; but the objectors themselves are equally ignorant; and as, on this account, they have no right to advance the objection, so we are under no obligation to put ourselves to the trouble of answering it. It is enough for us to know that God, all-wise and almighty, is able to perform what he has promised.

Some have supposed that there is “a germ or seminal principle in the human body, which is not destroyed by death; and which, at the appointed time, will reproduce the body in a more excellent form than before, through the quickening influence of Divine power.” But, we may ask, Is the human body a vegetable? Does it resemble a plant, which, when its leaves and stem are destroyed, retains life in the root, and will shoot forth again at the return of spring? Will the reproduction of the body, which we have been taught to consider as miraculous, be the result of a natural process? How is this germ or seminal principle preserved, when the body is reduced to ashes by fire, or undergoes a complete dissolution in the grave? Has any person seen it? Does any person understand what it means? Has it any existence but in the region of fancy and conjecture? We have frequently cause to complain that we meet with gratuitous assumptions and unintelligible propositions; and they occur in the writings of the learned, as well as in the conversation of the illiterate. Let no man talk of a germ or seminal principle of the body, till he has first, after patient thinking, assured himself that he affixes a distinct idea to his words. I consider the assertion, that there is such a principle, to be words and nothing more. Besides other absurdities, that is implied in it, that the body is not entirely dead; that there is a part of it, however small, in which life remains; for a dead germ or seed could not reproduce; and how there can be life in any particle of it, after the vital principle has forsaken it, we leave to the authors of this foolish hypothesis to explain. In our progress through the system of Divine truth, our way is impeded, not only by the blunders of vulgar ignorance, but by the unfounded speculations of false wisdom and philosophy.

The resurrection of the dead is the work of God. Yet it is ascribed to Jesus Christ without any inconsistency, because he is a Divine Person, and to him as Mediator the administration of the moral government of the Universe is committed. “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.”\* The resurrection will be a preparatory step to the judgment, which will immediately follow, and in which, sentence will be pronounced upon all the individuals of the human race, according to their works. “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in

\* John v. 28.



Christ shall rise first.”\* We do not understand the circumstances mentioned in these words; but, if they refer to the ministry of created beings on this occasion, we are sure that it is not by their agency that the dead will be restored to life. This is a work appropriated to divine power, which only is able to effect it. No voice will raise the dead but the voice of Jesus Christ. The office of angels will be subordinate; and as their presence will add to the grandeur of the scene, so they will be sent to convey the righteous from the earth to the right hand of their Saviour. “He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect, from one end of heaven to the other.”†

I have already stated, that there will be a resurrection of all men, good and bad, and that the justice of God seems to require, that as men have served him or sinned against him in the body, so in the body, they should be rewarded or punished. With regard to the wicked, the Scripture contents itself with informing us, that they shall be raised, and afterwards judged and cast into hell. It does not enter into a detailed account of the state and qualities of their bodies. All that we learn is, that they shall rise “to shame and everlasting contempt;” and hence we may probably infer, that their external appearance will be such as is befitting the character of criminals, and will exhibit marks of the curse, by which their whole person is devoted to irretrievable perdition.

In the subsequent part of this lecture, I shall confine your attention to the resurrection of the saints.

I begin with remarking, that there is an intimate connexion between their resurrection, and that of Jesus Christ. The simple re-union of their souls and bodies, is not to be considered as the effect of his mediation, because the same thing will take place with respect to the wicked; and of all opinions none is more absurd than that of certain Divines, who have maintained, that the general resurrection is a privilege which Christ has procured for mankind in general by his death. To the wicked the resurrection is not a privilege, but a curse; it is not the effect of the goodness, but of the avenging justice of God. What the saints owe to his mediation is a happy resurrection, the change of a tremendous evil into an unspeakable blessing. As he died not for himself, but for them, he has taken away the sting of death, or made it cease to be a penal evil to them; and rising in the character of their surety, he secured that they also shall rise, to enjoy the immortal life which is the recompense of his merit. “Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.”‡ Death came by the first man, because through his sin, his descendants, to whom its guilt is imputed, are rendered obnoxious to death; and the resurrection of the dead, must therefore come by the second man in a similar way. Through his righteousness imputed to them, they are made heirs of eternal life. It is perhaps on this account, that God is said “to have raised us up together with him, and made us sit together in heavenly places;”§ words which seem to import, that the resurrection of the saints is past, but which can only mean, that it is infallibly secured by that of Jesus Christ as their Head and Representative.

“Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.”|| The first fruits were by the command of God presented to him at a stated season, not only as a token of the gratitude of the Israelites for his bounty, but as an earnest of the approaching harvest. In this sense, he is called the first fruits of the dead. He was the first in order of time, for, although some were restored to life by the prophets and by himself during his personal ministry, none came out of their graves to return to them no more till after his resurrection; and as he was the first in respect of time, so he was the

\* 1 Thess. iv. 16.

§ Eph. ii. 6.

† Mat. xxiv. 31.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 21.

first in order of succession; all the saints following him, as the harvest followed the presentation of the first fruits of the temple. The interval is long, and the dreary sterility of the grave might justify the thought that the seed committed to it has perished for ever. But our hope rests upon his power, which can make the wilderness blossom as the rose; and we wait till heavenly influences descend as the dew of herbs, when the barren soil shall display all the luxuriance of vegetation, and death itself shall teem with life.

Of the change which will take place in the bodies of the saints, Paul speaks in his first Epistle to the Corinthians; but his words are too general to convey a distinct idea of the subject. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."\* We may, however, draw from them some conclusions respecting the state of the glorified body.

First, It will be incorruptible and immortal. In the present state, the human body is liable to dissolution, and contains in itself the principles of decay. It is subject to acute and chronic diseases, by which life is suddenly or slowly extinguished; and then the process of putrefaction begins, which terminates in the destruction of its organization, and the separation of its parts. In the future state it will be sound and healthy, and probably be so constituted as not to be naturally capable of disease and waste, while the penal cause of its disorders will no longer exist. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain."† The body will be immortal as the soul. Although things on earth, even the firmest and most solid substances, are wasted away; yet this appears to be the effect of the circumstances in which they are placed,—of the action, for example, of air and moisture. We do not know that all matter experiences decay. We are ignorant of its state beyond our own world; but we have reason to believe that the sun and stars are of the same magnitude, and emit the same splendour, as at the beginning; and can find no difficulty in conceiving any portion of matter to be made, by the will of God, immutable and eternal.

Secondly, The bodies of the saints will be glorious; but in what this glory will consist, we are not able to say. The word, glory, when applied to the body, suggests the idea of brightness or splendour; and in this sense we speak of the glory of the sun and the stars. It may seem to favour this meaning of the term in reference to the present subject, that at the transfiguration of our Lord, his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light;‡ and that when John saw him in Patmos, his face was like the mid-day sun, and his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet as burning brass,|| and we are told that the bodies of the saints will be fashioned like unto his glorious body.§ It is certain, however, with respect to the latter description, that some parts of it are emblematical; and we cannot therefore consider it as a true representation of the appearance of his body in heaven. We are equally uncertain with regard to the other appearance; because it does not follow, that the form in which our Saviour shewed himself to his disciples, living upon earth, and entertaining the common notion of corporeal glory is the form which he wears in a state so different from the present. There is no doubt that, in symmetry, and beauty, and dignity, the glorified body will be perfect. It will be finished after the highest pattern in the universe. Man will then be fair as in paradise, and fairer still than in that happy place. Of all the visible works of God, the most exquisite will be those bodies which his own Son has redeemed from death with his precious blood.

Thirdly, The bodies of the saints will be powerful. At present, they are

\* 1 Cor. xv. 42.—44.

† Rev. i. 14—16.

‡ Rev. xxi. 4.

§ Phil. iii. 21.

‡ Matth. xvii. 2.



subject to many infirmities; their strength is soon exhausted and they need food, and rest, and cordials, to restore them. In the future state, languor and weariness will be unknown. We have no means of estimating the strength of the glorified body, as we know of no resistance which it will have to overcome; but we may perhaps judge of it from a circumstance which is revealed concerning the righteous in heaven, that they will be uninterruptedly engaged in the service of God. Constant employment will cause no fatigue, and sleep will not be necessary to renovate their powers. It is plain, therefore, that their bodies will possess a degree of vigour and activity of which we can form no conception.

Lastly, The bodies of the saints will be spiritual. It is a remark which must occur to every person, that a spiritual body is an apparent contradiction; and we are therefore under the necessity of understanding the word, spiritual, in an unusual sense. It seems to signify refined, in opposition to the grossness of the present body, composed, as it is, of flesh, blood, and bones; and to this meaning we are led by the following words, which the Apostle subjoins as an explanation of his account of the glorified body, or as the reason of the change which it will undergo: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither can corruption inherit incorruption."\* Corruption is the present corruptible body, which, it is intimated, remaining as it is, or retaining its present constitution, cannot become incorruptible. It must undergo a new modification; in consequence of which, although still material, it will be very different from what it now is. We see matter existing in different states, composing a metal, and composing a sunbeam; and hence, it is easy to conceive the power of God so to refine the bodies of the saints, that they may be comparatively said to be spiritual. How pure, I had almost said ethereal, must those bodies be, which will need neither food nor rest, and will never experience pain or fatigue! It would be folly and presumption to speculate upon a subject of which we have so little information; but it is evident that certain parts of the body will no longer be necessary,—those, for example, which serve for the concoction and digestion of our food; and if the future body is not to be sustained by other substances, the use of the blood which circulates through the veins and arteries, to convey nourishment to every part, will be superseded. I might carry this reasoning farther; but after all we could arrive at no certain conclusion: and why should we seek to know what the Scriptures have concealed?

Some have entertained the idea that, before the general resurrection, there will be a partial resurrection of the saints, or of the martyrs; and found it upon the following words: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."† This passage has given rise to the notion of the personal reign of Christ upon the earth; and those by whom it has been espoused are called Millenarians. It is, however, too obscure to be made the foundation of a positive opinion. It probably refers to a spiritual resurrection,—a resurrection of the cause for which the martyrs suffered; which will then be triumphant; and while their names will be held in honour, persons of the same spirit will arise and reign with Christ, in the undisturbed enjoyment of religion and its privileges, Satan being bound, and his agents reduced to inactivity and silence. Some such interpretation is favoured by this circumstance, that John speaks not of the bodies, but of the

\* 1 Cor. xv. 50.

† Rev. xx. 4, 5.

souls of those who had been slain. No wise man would oppose a vision, in which the description is professedly figurative, to the plain declaration of Scripture, that the resurrection will take place at the second coming of Christ. It is worthy of attention that, when speaking of that event, Paul makes mention of two classes of persons, the dead in the grave, and those who will be alive ; and says concerning the latter, that they shall be changed, or undergo the same change with those who are raised. But, if some of the saints had been previously raised, such a change would not be necessary to them ; and we may therefore conclude that there will be no persons of this description among the last generation of mankind.

“Behold, I show you a mystery : we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”\* The law of mortality admits of exceptions, and an entire generation will be exempted from its operation. I formerly showed you that death is not necessary to the complete sanctification of the soul ; although, in the case of those who die, that is the period when it is completed. The bodies of those who are alive when Christ comes, will be as unfit for the heavenly state as the bodies lying in the grave, and will therefore undergo the same change ; with this difference only, that there will be no recomposition, but a sudden transformation of them. This moment, they will be weary, hungry, faint, diseased, and racked with pain ; the next, they will be invested with the glories of immortality. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump ; for the trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”† But, in the first place, as we are informed, the dead saints shall be raised. What a wonderful sight ! mortals changed into immortals ! the earth and the sea yielding up their treasures, and men mingling with angels who have descended to convey them to their own blessed abodes ! “Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we be ever with the Lord.”‡

## LECTURE LXXXIII.

### ON THE FINAL STATE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

The Final Judgment of the Saints.—Their Acquittal and Entrance into Heaven.—Their Supreme Felicity : its Nature and Sources.

THE resurrection of the dead will be followed by the general judgment, in which small and great shall stand before God to receive their final sentence. There will be a visible appearance of Jesus Christ, who will come with great power and glory, and will erect his throne in the clouds. His ministers will be the angles, who will be sent forth to gather together his elect from all parts of the earth in which they are dwelling, or in which their bodies are deposited. Saints and sinners are now mingled together in the common offices of life, and are connected by various ties ; but then they will be parted for ever. “Before him shall be gathered all nations ; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats ; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.”§ These words are commonly understood in a literal sense, as if the places mentioned would be respectively occupied by the two opposite classes of mankind ; but perhaps a little

\* 1 Cor. xv. 51. † 1 Cor. xv. 52. ‡ 1 Thess. iv. 17. § Matth. xxv. 32, 33.  
VOL. II.—41.



reflection will show us that this interpretation cannot be admitted, and does not accord with our other conceptions of the grand assize. If the Son of Man is to sit on his throne in the clouds, and the saints are to be caught up to meet him in the air, the position of the two parties on the right and left hand cannot be so easily imagined, and it may be presumed to be a figurative description. The place at the right hand, which will be assigned to the righteous, may signify the station of honour which they will occupy; for this is the general idea which that situation suggests in Scripture, particularly when our Saviour himself is said to sit at the right hand of his Father, who has no right hand, but has exalted him "far above all principalities and powers."

In the figurative description of the transactions of the last day, in the Revelation of John, we are informed that "the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life."\* It is out of this book that the saints will be judged, whether we understand by it the Gospel, or the divine decree by which they were appointed to salvation. To the law, as the rule of justification and condemnation, they are not amenable; for they have been delivered from it by Jesus Christ, and when they believed in him, they declared that they ceased to seek righteousness by it. The question, therefore, will not be, whether they have fulfilled or transgressed this law; but, whether they possess the precious faith which God has appointed to be the only means of obtaining salvation. No inquiry will be necessary for the satisfaction of the Judge, who knows their hearts, and by his grace produced all the good which will be found in them; but it will be necessary for the great design of the general judgment, which is, the manifestation of his righteousness in the final allotment of the human race. To convince all that it is not by an arbitrary decision that heaven is assigned to them in preference to others, and that the sentence is founded in reasons which accord with the rectitude of Divine administration, evidence will be exhibited of the validity of their title; and this evidence will be furnished by their works: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."† It is evident to every person who understands his Bible, that the works of the saints are here mentioned, not as the foundation, but as the evidence of their title. If men are not justified by works but, by faith; if they are not saved by their merit, but by grace; it is certain, that the final sentence can refer to their works only as proofs, to all who shall witness the decision, that they are the persons to whom the promise of eternal life belongs, or believers, whose faith wrought by love and thus demonstrated its genuineness.

It appears that the good works of the saints will be mentioned in the judgment, and for what purpose they will be produced. But will any mention be made of their sins? This is a question about which those who have deemed it worthy of attention are divided in sentiment. It has been said by such as maintain that they will not be mentioned, that there is no reference to them in the account which our Lord gives of the general judgment, in the Gospel of Matthew; that the remission of them is expressed in such terms as imply that they are henceforth to be for ever concealed, for they are "cast into the depths of the sea, and are to be remembered no more;" that it is not consonant to the character of the Judge, who is also the propitiation for their sins, to suppose that he will bring them to light in a manner so public; and that, notwithstanding their full acquittal, we could not conceive the saints not to be affected with shame, if their crimes, the recollection of which has often made them blush and hang down their heads, were exposed to the view of the universe

\* Rev. xx. 12,

† Matth. xxv. 34—36.

But, in opposition to these arguments, it is said that, according to Scripture, "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil;"\* that justice seems to require that there should be an impartial review of the conduct of each individual; that to recall the memory of the sins of the saints, will display the virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, and the riches of the grace of God, through which they have been pardoned; that, in many cases, the sins of the wicked could not be published without the publication of theirs, as they were associated in the same deeds; that some of them are already made public in the Scriptures, and are held up as a spectacle to all generations; and that no feeling of shame would be excited, because God has fully remitted their trespasses, and they glory in the righteousness of Christ, with which they are adorned.

There is some force in the arguments on both sides, and it is not easy to determine which preponderates; but we need not perplex ourselves about the matter, as in truth the question is more curious than profitable, and nothing will be gained or lost by a decision in either way.

But, whether the particular sins of the saints will or will not be mentioned in the judgment, there can be no doubt that there will be a general reference to them. Glorious as their appearance will be, it will be understood that they were once sinners, who deserved to be placed on the left hand of the Judge, but were pardoned through Divine mercy; and it will be an important part of the transactions of the last day, to publish the sentence of acquittal in the ears of angels and men. If their title to the favour of God is often a subject of doubt to themselves amidst the darkness of the present state, their fears are dispelled, either before they die, or immediately after their spirits enter into the presence of God. But by others it is disputed, and the grounds on which it rests are accounted imaginary, while their faith is derided as a foolish presumptuous fancy, and the doctrine of imputed righteousness is pronounced to be the dream of a shadow. The decision of the last day will put an end for ever to these suspicions and accusations. Who shall condemn those whom God has justified? There are, besides, many calumnious charges advanced against the people of God, through ignorance or malice, which, indeed are in this case very nearly allied; for although they may sometimes originate in mistake, yet there is a disposition on the part of the ungodly to adopt the charges, from prejudice against religion, and a wish to hold up to contempt and detestation men whose persons they hate, because they hate their principles. We know what were the slanders of the Jews and Gentiles against the Christians in the primitive times; it appears from history, that these have been repeated, or new ones have been invented in succeeding ages; and the same hostility subsists, and discovers itself in the opprobrious names with which the genuine disciples of Jesus are branded. Precisians, puritans, methodists, enthusiasts, fanatics, hypocrites, are some of the terms of contempt in the world's copious vocabulary; and they are applied to them because they have imbibed the spirit, and act under the influence, of the religion which even their enemies profess to respect. But the final sentence will vindicate the character of the righteous, and make the infamy light upon those with whom it originated. Then shall these words be fulfilled in all their extent: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord,"†

The saints having been openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, will make their triumphant entry into the place destined for their reception: "These shall go away into everlasting life." The place is called heaven, by which we understand that region of the universe in which angels and

\* Ecc. xii. 14,

† Isa. liv. 17.



the spirits of the just now dwell, and all the righteous shall be finally assembled. Where it is situated, we do not know. We speak of it as above us : but the phrase is used in conformity to a notion founded upon the appearance of the visible heavens. What is above us at this moment, will be beneath us twelve hours hence, in consequence of the revolution of the earth ; and what is beneath us, seems to be above to those who are on the opposite side of the globe. Our ideas of its situation are therefore vague ; and there is only one thing, which it seems warrantable to conclude, that it lies beyond the limits of the visible creation ; for Jesus Christ, who is now in it, is said to have ascended "above all heavens," that is, above the aerial and starry heavens, according to the Jewish division of the superior regions. That it is a place, we have no reason to doubt, and it is an imaginary refinement to consider it only as a state. It is undeniable that God can make any place heaven by there revealing himself, and communicating the fulness of his love ; but this is nothing to the purpose. Our business is not with speculations about his power, but with the declarations of his word ; and Scripture uniformly supposes that there is a particular place, which is appointed to be the final abode of the righteous. There have been curious and idle discussions respecting the *ubi* of Spirits, and whether, as they are not material, and cannot like body be confined within definite limits, places can be predicated of them ; but there is no occasion at present to perplex ourselves with the arguments on either side, because the saints in the future state will be clothed with a material frame. It must be a material place which is inhabited by our blessed Saviour, and Enoch, and Elijah, and the saints who came out of their graves after the resurrection of Christ, and will be inhabited hereafter by the thousands and millions whom he will raise to life at his second coming.

Concerning the nature of the place we can form no conjectures. The descriptions of it are undoubtedly figurative. Some parts of our earth display scenes of astonishing grandeur and consummate beauty ; but heaven will be inconceivably superior to what the earth was, even before its loveliness had been impaired by the curse. It seems reasonable to suppose that it will be totally different from the earth, because the beings who inhabit it, although men, will be entirely changed in respect of the constitution of their bodies. We are indeed told in the book of Revelation, that a river flows in it, and that trees grow upon its banks ;\* but who does not perceive, that the subject would be degraded by a literal interpretation, and that the ideas suggested are those of beauty, refreshment, and abundance ? It is presented to us under the image of a city of pure gold, the foundation and gates of which are composed of precious stones.† "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it ; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it ; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day ; for there shall be no night there."‡ All that we can say is, that in heaven there will be visible tokens of the presence of God. Upon earth he manifests himself, not only by impressions upon the minds of his intelligent creatures, but by displays of his perfections in the splendour of the heavens, and the various processes which are going on above us and around us. We may believe, therefore, that he will manifest himself in heaven, both by a secret intercourse with the souls of the saints, and by such external signs as will show that he is near, and that this is his temple and his palace. Who can conceive the majesty and glory of the place which he has chosen for his peculiar residence. Here all the magnificence and beauty, which we admire in the universe, will be united with beauty and mag-

\* Rev. xxii. 1, 2.

† Ib. xxi. 19, 21.

‡ Ib. 23—25.

nificence of which we can form no idea. It will be the noblest work of his almighty hand.

It has been asked, whether, in this blessed abode, the saints will know one another? One should think that the question was unnecessary, as the answer naturally presents itself to every man's mind; and it could only have occurred to some dreaming Theologian, who, in his airy speculations, has soared far beyond the sphere of reason and common sense. Who can doubt whether the saints will know one another? What reason can be given why they should not? Would it be any part of their perfection to have all their former ideas obliterated, and to meet as strangers in the other world? Would it give us a more favourable notion of the assembly in heaven, to suppose it to consist of a multitude of unknown individuals, who never hold communication with each other; or by some inexplicable restraint are prevented, amidst an intimate intercourse, from making mutual discoveries? Or have they forgotten what they themselves were, so that they cannot reveal it to their associates? What would be gained by this ignorance no man can tell; but we can tell what would be lost by it. They would lose all the happiness of meeting again on the peaceful shore, those from whom they were separated by the storms of life; of seeing among the trophies of Divine grace, many of whom they had despaired, and for whose sakes they had gone down with sorrow to the grave; of knowing the good which they had been honoured to do, and being surrounded with the individuals who had been saved by means of their prayers, and instructions, and labours. How could those whom he had been the instrument of converting, and building up in the holy faith, be to the minister of the gospel a crown of joy and rejoicing in the day of the Lord, if he did not recognize them when standing at his side? The saints will be free from the turbulence of passion, but their innocent affections will remain; and could they spend eternal ages without asking, Are our children here? Are our still dearer relatives here? Have our friends, with whom we took sweet counsel together, found their way to this country, to which we travelled in company till death parted us? And, if to these questions no answer could be returned, would they be happy?

The same mode of thinking which suggested this question, has led to another strange notion of heaven, as if it would be a state of solitary enjoyment. It has been glossed over, too, with the appearance of piety; and it has been said, that the saints will be so absorbed in the contemplation and enjoyment of God, that they will not need the society of others, and will be insensible to their presence. But, while we acknowledge that God alone is sufficient to the happiness of his creatures, and cordially concur in the sentiment that he is the chief good, we must not permit ourselves to be carried away by imposing sounds, and follow even piety in its fanciful wanderings. What some mystic, or some good but enthusiastic man may have said, is nothing to us, whose ideas of future and invisible things should rest on a more solid foundation. The question is, what kind of heaven has God promised to his people, and what kind of heaven is suitable to the nature of man? With respect to the latter question, I remark, that, although the present relations among mankind, of father and son, husband and wife, which are dissolved at death, will not be renewed, yet the general relation of a common descent, and a common nature, strengthened by the relation arising from a common redemption, will remain; and the love, too, will remain which is implied in those relations, and leads to the performance of their duties. Human nature will be purified and exalted, but will not be essentially changed. Without such a change, however, we could not conceive its present tendency to union and fellowship with others to cease. Unless man should become a totally different being, he could not be perfectly happy in absolute solitude. It is true, indeed, that, according to the



hypothesis, all his desires will be concentrated upon his Maker; but before we can admit this assumption, we must be assured that his instinctive desire for communion with his equals will be extinguished, or in other words, that he will receive a new constitution. If love to his fellow-men should remain, it would, according to the hypothesis be superfluous and useless; a power preserved but never to be exercised. What idea can any person form of the family of heaven, consisting of insulated individuals, of brothers connected in the most intimate bonds, but holding no correspondence? With regard to the other part of the question, which relates to the heaven which God has promised to his people; you know that it is positively represented as a state of society. And how could it enter into any sound mind to conceive of it otherwise? Are not its inhabitants the identical persons, who were congregated into one body upon earth, and united in the same faith, and love, and worship; and why, when they are assembled again in the celestial sanctuary, should they be supposed immediately to separate, that each may dwell in his own recess, through an eternal duration, like the solitaries of the desert? It is not thus that revelation describes the world to come. "In my Father's house are many mansions."\* What a wild imagination must it be which would suppose that those mansions are to be tenanted by individuals living in a state of seclusion from the family? No; the natural suggestion is, that heaven is furnished with every accommodation; that there all those comforts will be found which we usually enjoy in a house—rest, peace, society, and friendship; that it is the place of final meeting to the children of God, as the members of a human family, who were separated during the day, and scattered abroad in pursuit of their respective employments, assemble in the evening in their common habitation. In the revelation of John, they are represented as "standing" before the throne; but that we may not imagine that they stand there as units composing the aggregate number, without any other tie but juxta-position, they are farther represented as engaged in the same service of adoration and thanksgiving. It is not the song of each man for himself, but the song of the multitude of the redeemed, which will be heard in the celestial temple. "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."† There, they will meet, and rejoice, who upon earth went to the house of God in company; and there, they will meet who never met before, and will hail one another as brethren.

Praise is represented to be the employment of the saints in heaven; and who can doubt that the representation is just? Every individual will feel his infinite obligations to Divine grace, and will experience ineffable delight in expressing them. Whether there will be vocal praise in heaven, cannot be ascertained from the figurative descriptions of it; but that it will be vocal does not seem improbable, as the saints, having bodies, may be conceived to have also organs of speech. Yet, on reflection it cannot be supposed, that praise will be their only and perpetual exercise. They will serve God day and night in his temple; but there are other ways in which this service may be performed. They will have minds to contemplate, as well as hearts to love him; and why may we not presume that a portion of their happy existence will be devoted to the survey of the glorious manifestations of his attributes, and the review of his wonderful works? They will be surrounded with their redeemed brethren; and will they not enter into conversation with them upon subjects in which they are all equally interested? Will they not listen with delight to one another's history, and feel their hearts glow with admiration and love, while

\* John xiv. 2.

† Rev. vii. 9, 10.

in every new tale there are new displays of Divine wisdom and goodness? But we speak as children do of the actions of men, and with still less knowledge. We are ignorant whether language will be used in heaven as the vehicle of thought, or some new medium of communication will be established. We understand still less the manner in which intercourse will be maintained between men who have bodily senses and organs, and angels who are incorporeal beings. But one thing we know, that angels and men will be united in one holy society, and will dwell together in perfect friendship, loving one another, receiving and communicating happiness.

But the felicity of the saints in the heavenly world, will not arise solely from the nature of the place which they inhabit, and from the company with which they are associated. As the chief end of man is the glory of God, so his supreme happiness consists in the enjoyment of him. This is the judgment of all regenerated men; and heaven is the object of their hope, because in that place their desires for his presence and the full communication of his love, will be gratified. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth whom I desire besides thee."\*

Our Saviour pronounces the pure in heart to be blessed, "for they shall see God."† There is only an apparent contradiction between his words and those of Paul, who says of the blessed and only Potentate, that "no man hath seen, or can see him;"‡ for the one speaks of mental, and the other of corporeal vision. As God is a spiritual being, he has never been seen by mortal eyes; the appearances of him which are mentioned in Scripture having been symbols and sensible forms assumed for a time. For the same reason, no man will see him, even in the future state; for it should be remembered that, although the bodies of the saints will be highly refined, it is physically impossible that a spirit should be perceived by material organs. Jesus Christ will be seen, because he is clothed with human nature; but the Father dwells amidst inaccessible light. It is not inconsistent with what is now stated, to suppose, a visible manifestation of his glory, similar to the symbol which appeared in the most holy place, or the representation made to Moses, when the Lord passed by him, and proclaimed his name; because, this would not be God himself, but only a sign of his presence.

The saints will see God with their minds, or attain knowledge clear and comprehensive, when compared with the obscure and imperfect knowledge which they at present derive from his works and his word. "Now," says Paul, "we know in part, and prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."§ Strong as this language is, it must not be understood of an adequate knowledge; for an infinite being can be comprehended only by an infinite understanding. The knowledge of the future state will be comparatively perfect, free from doubts and errors, and much more extensive than it is at present possible to acquire. Here, our progress is slow, and impeded by obstacles. There, knowledge will be infused into the mind without the operose process of instruction and inquiry. Here, our views are limited; and we see only the skirts of his glory; there, the revelation will be as ample as our finite faculties will permit. What the saints already know, will shine with new light, and present itself to their minds with an evidence and a satisfaction which they never formerly experienced; and many things will be disclosed to them, which it had not entered into their hearts to conceive: mysteries will be explained, difficulties will be solved, and excellencies will rise to view in the Divine nature, of which no vestige was discoverable in his works. How glorious will he appear, when every veil is removed, and he is contemplated

\* Ps. lxxiii. 25.

† Matth. v. 8.

‡ 1 Tim. vi. 15.

§ 1 Cor. xiii. 9—12.



in the fulness of his attributes ! The sight will be transporting, and will excite the highest admiration and joy.

As the Almighty cannot be sought out to perfection by any finite mind, we do not conceive the knowledge of the saints in heaven to be stationary. It is possible, indeed, that although it is now progressive, it may arrive at a point beyond which it is destined not to proceed ; at least, we could not prove this supposition to be absurd. The soul might acquire, on its first entrance into heaven, or on its re-union to the body at the last day, all the knowledge of which it was capable ; and this being sufficient for its happiness, there might be no further expansion of its faculties. But we naturally judge of the future state by the present ; and finding that the soul now advances from step to step, we are led to anticipate its perpetual progression. There is no doubt that the will of the Creator can indefinitely enlarge its powers, and that, in the infinitude of his nature, there will be new discoveries to be made for ever and ever. In the course of an eternal duration, all the wonders of creation may be surveyed, however wide its extent, and however numerous its parts ; but He, in comparison of whom it is as nothing, can never be fully understood.

The knowledge of God in the future state will be accompanied with love ; for it is impossible to contemplate infinite excellence without loving it, without loving it intensely and supremely. In this world, the saints prefer God to their chief joy ; and there are seasons when their hearts go out to him with an ardour which no created object can excite, with vehement desire for the closest union and the most intimate fellowship. But this flame will glow more ardently in the pure atmosphere of heaven. Here, love struggles with the infirmity of the flesh, the reluctance of corrupt nature, the operations of selfishness, the opposing influence of visible things, by which the senses and the imagination are so powerfully affected ; but there, free and unconfined, it will be concentrated upon its object with ineffable delight. Brought back from his wanderings into the immediate presence of his Father, man will indeed love him with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. The fervour of his affection will never abate, nor will any thing occur to suspend it, or to turn it into a different channel. God will always maintain the pre-eminence, and appear infinitely greater and better than all other beings ; and his love to other beings will be in perfect harmony with supreme love to God, will flow from this exalted source and will be attracted by his image, as impressed upon them in all its loveliness and glory. Some ancient philosophers imagined, that, after death, the souls of men were absorbed by the Divine essence, from which they had originally emanated ; and mystics have talked of being identified with God, and deified in him. These are the dreams of ignorance, and the ravings of insanity. But there will be a union of the most intimate kind between God and the soul in the future state ; such a union as is effected by the purest and most active mutual love ; and the saints will be one with him in a higher sense than we are able to conceive. There will not be a momentary opposition of desires and interests. They will rejoice in God as he is, and every power will be devoted to him alone. Upon him their thoughts will be constantly fixed, and in communion with him their never-failing joy will consist.

“ Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease : whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.”\* But love never fails. It is adapted to every condition of our nature, and constitutes its moral perfection. “ Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three : but the greatest of these is love.”† In the world to come, faith will be unnecessary, because its object is seen ; and hope because its object is possessed. Faith will terminate in vision, and hope, in enjoyment ; but love will remain, and join all hearts in one.

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

† Ib. 13.

From the observations already made, the happiness of the saints in the celestial regions is unquestionable; but for a more full illustration of it, we may consider that it will arise from the absence of all the causes of pain and sorrow, to the operation of which they are at present exposed; from the presence of the highest possible good, and from the certainty of the perpetual possession of it.

"There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."\* Sin and suffering are connected as cause and effect. But all the inhabitants of heaven will be sinless, and consequently will no longer be subjected to those sufferings which are now the just punishment or chastisements of their offences, and are necessary to check their wayward dispositions, and to awaken them to repentance. There will be no disease, or pain of body, no anxiety of mind, no fear, no regret, no disappointment, no unsatisfied wishes, no restlessness and discontent, no seasons of melancholy and depression, no broken friendships, no envy and jealousy, no distressing sympathies, no separation from those whom we love. Affliction, when it now passes over the mind, sometimes makes deep furrows, which time does not erase. But there will be no trace of past sorrows in the heart of the saints; no wounds still bleeding, or so slightly healed that a touch opens them again. Remembering all the evils which befell them in this sublunary state, all the sad scenes which they witnessed, all the losses which they sustained, all the agonies which they endured, their minds will be smooth and placid as the bosom of a lake when not an air breathes upon it. Reflection upon the past will serve only to heighten the contrast, and to give them a more lively feeling of their present enjoyments. Who can conceive the calm of the heavenly regions, where no tempest blows, and the sound of lamentation is never heard; where no qualms of conscience are felt, and not a transient thought disturbs the serenity of the soul; where every emotion and every reflection is delightful, and all within and without is bliss! They to whom death made this world a blank, and who went down into the grave mourning because they were bereaved, mourn no more, having found those whom they bewailed, or far better friends. They have no will but the will of God; and those whom he does not love, have ceased to be the objects of their regard. "God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."†

But this is not the sole cause of their felicity. They are not only exempt from all evil, but are put in possession of the greatest possible good; and the good is not the perfection of their own nature, or the resources of their enlightened and holy minds, but God himself, who is their everlasting reward. The soul having wandered from him, finds no rest upon earth; nor would it find it in heaven, if he were not there. The happiness of man in paradise, was the favour of his maker; and this alone will be his happiness when he is recovered from the effects of the fall. How could he be happy in a state of separation from God? Can a tree live and flourish, when cut off from all communication with the elements which are appointed to nourish it? The rational creation, abandoned by him, would wither and die; like the vegetable creation, when the rain and dew of heaven are withheld. The wicked will be miserable, not so much on account of the place to which they are consigned,—for the Divine favour could change a prison into a palace,—as because they will see God afar off, being banished from his gracious presence, and separated from him by an impassable gulf. It is the presence of God which makes heaven, the asylum of the saints, the seat of perfect joy. There they see him as he is, and hold communion with him, intimate, uninterrupted, and everlasting. Surely he who made the soul of man has access to it, and is able to

\* Rev. xxi. 4.

† Rev. xxi. 4.



impress such a sense of his love as will fill it with ineffable satisfaction. The pleasure which we at present experience from pious meditation, or from the contemplation of nature, and the participation of the blessings which it supplies, is referrible to him as its Author; and shows us that he can make the faculties of our souls, and the organs of our bodies, vehicles of bliss. When he shall no longer withhold his hand, but pour out upon the objects of his favour blessings in profusion, their most ample desires will be gratified, and their highest expectations surpassed. If the saints upon earth triumph, because they can say, "The Lord is the portion of our inheritance;"\* how much greater will be their exultation, when they know the full value of their portion, the boundless extent of their inheritance! God himself will be their God. He who is all fair and all good, to whom all perfection belongs, and of whose transcendent excellence this glorious universe is only a shadow,—he will be theirs, and will bless them for ever; he will be all in all, around them and within them, the light of their understandings, the joy of their hearts, the object of their perpetual praise.

Let it be observed once more, that this felicity will be heightened by the knowledge that it is everlasting. In heaven there is no apprehension of evil, which disturbs our best hours upon earth, and is excited partly by the suggestions of conscience, and partly by our experience of the vicissitudes of human affairs. Here we ought to rejoice with trembling; and often in our most cheerful moments we are visited with the unwelcome forebodings of a change. Who can say without presumption, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant?" The joys of religion are equally subject to mutation as those of a temporal nature; either because the saints are not at all times disposed to receive them, and by the unhappy influence of unbelief they are excluded from their souls; or, because God is pleased to suspend them for the trial of their faith and the chastisement of their sins. The state of heaven is totally different. The duration of all created beings is progressive, and is made up of moments following each other in perpetual succession; but that of the saints will bring no change of circumstances, and may be compared to the duration of the sun and the stars, which, from age to age, are fixed in the same point of space, and shine with undiminished splendour. Eternity will then have commenced, which, as it flows on, carries all things along in a uniform uninterrupted stream of bliss or woe. The very possibility of an end would mar the felicity of the righteous. It would be suspended while the question was asked, Will our joy last for ever? and the doubt implied in that question would make fear pass over the mind as the shadow of a cloud, and dim the lustre of the surrounding scenery. Still more fatal would be the effect, if there were positive ground to suspect that their joy would come to an end. The idea of annihilation, from which nature recoils, would be doubly terrible. Who could bear the thought of losing life in its highest perfection; of closing his eyes on this transcendent glory to behold it no more; of sinking into eternal insensibility after ages of rapturous bliss? But it is an eternal redemption of which Jesus Christ is the Author. The last change which his followers experience is death; or, if you will, the resurrection, when the separate spirits will be again embodied. They then enter upon a career which will never be finished. Ages will run on more rapidly than hours among mortals: but thousands of ages will take nothing from their felicity. God has made them by his gift, what he himself is in his own nature; and of them, as well as of him, it may be said, that their years shall have no end. "There is no night there." "The sun shall no more light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. They sun shall no more go down;

\* Psalm xvi. 5.

neither shall the moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.”\*

Whether there will be different degrees of glory in heaven, is a question more curious than useful. Those who adopt the negative allege a variety of reasons,—as, that all the saints are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and being equal in this respect, have a title to an equal reward; that they all stand in the same relation to God, as his children are all the first-born, and will therefore receive the same inheritance; that it would seem an imperfection, if one of them had less glory than another, and the former might conceive something better than he actually possessed, and be disturbed by an anxious desire for it; that our Saviour has promised to all a kingdom, and has said that they shall all shine forth as the sun; and that, while we speak of a difference among them, we use words to which no distinct meaning can be annexed, as it is granted that all will be perfect. Those who adopt the positive side of the question, appeal to the different degrees of grace in this world, from which they infer that there will be different degrees of glory in the next. They grant that all saints will be perfectly happy, but compare them to vessels of different sizes, which are all full, although some contain a greater quantity than others; and they support themselves by several passages of Scripture, as the parable of the talents,† in which the servants are recompensed according to their diligence; the declaration of Paul, that “he who soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully;”‡ and of Daniel, that “they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.”§ With respect to the last passage, the supposed difference in the degree of splendour must be considered as imaginary, till it is shown what is meant by the “brightness of the firmament,” and that it is inferior to the brightness of the stars; and till it be proved that something more is intended, than simply to convey, by a variety of phrase, the general idea of glory. The passage in the Epistle to the Corinthians, which says that one star differs “from another in glory,”§ has been also quoted in favour of this opinion, by those who attended to the sound, without thinking of the sense. Any intelligent person who reads the passage, will perceive that the Apostle is speaking of a totally different subject,—the difference between the present and the future bodies of the saints; and is illustrating it by the different appearances which matter assumes in the plastic hands of the Almighty.

It is of no consequence what view you take of the question; and to discuss it either here or elsewhere, would serve no valuable purpose. The prize proposed to all is of incalculable value, and is worthy of the highest efforts which are made to obtain it. Whether the final allotment of the saints shall be equal or unequal, they will all be content, and will all rejoice with joy unspeakable.

\* Is. lx. 19, 20.

‡ Dan. xii. 3.

† Matth. xxv. 15.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 41.

‡ 2 Cor. ix. 6.



## LECTURE LXXXIV.

## ON THE EXTERNAL MEANS OF GRACE.—THE WORD OF GOD.

**External Means of Grace Necessary to all but Infants.—The Word of God the Earliest and Principal Means.—Division of the Word into the Law and the Gospel.—Different Senses of the term Gospel.—Its Proper Meaning as Distinguished from the Law.—The Gospel not a New Law of Grace.—Its Efficacy as a Means.**

IN the preceding lectures, we have surveyed the scheme of redemption in its contrivance, its execution, and its application. Originating in the love of God before the world began, it was carried into effect by the mission and death of his Son; and its blessings are communicated to us by the agency of his Spirit. In this wonderful economy all the persons of the Godhead are concerned, and each performs his appropriate part. It is the work of God alone; and, in one view, resembles the creation of the universe, in which he had no assistant, and accomplished all things by the immediate exertion of his power. But in another view, it may be compared to the work of providence, in which he is the great Agent, but his designs are carried on by the instrumentality of means; by second causes, physical and moral; by the laws of gravitation, and motion, and light; by the activity of men, and the ministry of angels.

In considering the external means which he employs for the salvation of those whom his Son died to redeem, we must direct our attention in the first place to his Word, in which his will is revealed, and by which the intellectual and moral powers of man are influenced in subservience to his purpose; for God deals with him in religion as a rational being. The effect must be ascribed to his power, acting upon the soul in a manner unknown to us: but in ordinary cases it does not operate immediately. I say in ordinary cases, because we must except from this rule infants, who being born in sin, need to be regenerated as well as adults, but are not the proper subjects of that process by which the latter are renewed. Of the change which they undergo we can form no idea, as it is not accompanied with any external effects by which it might be distinguished, not even by a new train of thoughts, and volitions, and affections, of which they are incapable; but whatever it is, it is produced without means, by the direct agency of the Spirit. In this case means are excluded, because they cannot be used; for infants, not being yet moral agents, are not the proper subjects of conviction, illumination, and conversion, in the established sense of the terms. In the economy of grace, as well as in that of nature, divine wisdom connects variety with regularity, and changes its modes of procedure according to circumstances; being equally wonderful in deviating from its general laws as in adhering to them.

The exclusion of means, as far as we know, is confined to infants. We have no reason to think that men are sometimes illuminated by inspiration, and that good impressions are made upon their minds independently of any external cause. It has been supposed, indeed, that God may make known his will, and communicate the benefits of redemption to pious heathens, without his word and ordinances. Who those heathens are that may be called pious, without an abuse of the term, I do not understand; nor could any man, whose notions of piety were formed upon Scripture and sound reason, ever find them out; and till it is proved that there are such persons, we may save ourselves the trouble of inquiring how they will be disposed of; but every thing that is said concerning the possibility of a revelation to them, without the word, written or preached, is a gratuitous assumption, and besides, appears to be at variance with revelation itself: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the

Lord, shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things? So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."\* These words comprehend all that we are authorized to believe on this subject; that salvation is connected in the Divine constitution with the means of grace; and that, without these, the end is not to be expected. If God ever sets aside this constitution in particular cases, he has not told us of it; and to affirm that he does so, is downright presumption.

From the beginning, the application of redemption has been conducted by external means, or by the revelation of the will of God, and ordinances founded upon that revelation. Immediately after the fall, God was pleased to make known his purpose of grace to our first parents not by a direct address, but by conveying a notice of it in the threatening pronounced upon the serpent who had deceived them. As the threatening, while it foreboded evil to him, betokened good to them, it had in this respect the nature of a promise, and has therefore been so called. It is not to be supposed, however, that this is all the information which was given them concerning the Redeemer. Something more explicit and ample was necessary to relieve their minds from the fears of guilt, and to direct them in the new system of worship adapted to their circumstances; of which sacrifices were an important part. Of the additional intimations which might be made to the patriarchs, the Scriptures have given only a partial account; but partly by tradition, and partly by occasional communications, the knowledge of Divine mercy, and the future Saviour, was maintained till the days of Moses, who flourished fifteen hundred years before the Christian era. But although, between him and Adam, there was a long interval of two thousand and five hundred years, the intermediate steps were few, in consequence of the longevity of the early inhabitants of the world. From the creation to the present moment, there have not been a hundred and fifty individuals in a line; from the creation to Moses, there were not twenty. Hence it appears, that, without new revelations to revive and enlarge the original revelation, the communication made to our first parents, which, concise as it was, could be easily remembered, might have been transmitted pure and entire to the lawgiver of the Jews, by whom it was committed to writing.

Revelation was greatly enlarged by the ministry of Moses, and additions were made to it till the days of Malachi, when the canon of the Old Testament was completed. After a long interval, the Baptist appeared, to prepare the way for our Saviour; who, being in the bosom of the Father, and acquainted with his counsels, declared him to the world, and empowered his disciples to perfect revelation by their writings, which were composed under the direction and assistance of his Spirit. The whole Scriptures are delivered to us as the rule of our faith and obedience, and are the instrument which God employs for the conversion of sinners, and the advancement of the divine life in their souls. They are the light which conducts them to the Saviour, and guides them in the way of Salvation. This important office we assign to the whole, and not exclusively to a part, on the authority of the Apostle Paul; who, having said concerning Timothy, that "from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," adds, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto

\* Rom. x. 13—17.



all good works.”\* The Word is the principal means which God has appointed for the application of redemption. There are indeed other religious institutions; but as they are founded on the Word, so, as far as they contribute to accomplish this end, their efficacy is derived from it. Prayer is an eminent means of obtaining spiritual blessings; but the directory of prayer is the word, from which alone we learn what blessings we should ask, and what are the grounds on which we may hope for success. The sacraments also are means of salvation; but they would be unintelligible, unless their design, and the import of the symbols and actions, had been explained; and we should have no encouragement to use them, if we had not been assured that they are seals of the new covenant, and the Holy Spirit had been promised to render them effectual.

The word of God consists of many parts, histories, doctrines, promises, threatenings, reproofs, exhortations. I shall perhaps speak of these particularly afterwards; but, in the mean time I observe, there is not one of them which is not conducive to the great design of saving the soul. There are two great divisions of the word of God, which have been made by Theologians, and which, as they have a foundation in the word itself, are entitled to particular attention. These are, the Law and the Gospel. I shall begin with the latter, and in the first place, inquire what is the import of the term.

The word, Gospel, is used in our language to express the Greek word *εὐαγγέλιον*, which signifies *good news*. Without losing this idea, it admits of different applications, and is employed in a more general, or in a more restricted sense.

First, It signifies the history of Christ; and, accordingly, is the title prefixed to each of the four narratives of his birth, doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension, which were composed by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These received this name at a very early period, and it is retained in all Christian churches. Sometimes they were called Memoirs of Christ; but this designation does not seem to have been ever generally adopted. The other was suggested, not only by the nature of the narratives, which contain the best news that ever reached the ears of men, but by one of the inspired writers, who has prefixed it to his account of our Saviour; namely Mark, who commences with these words, “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” This is evidently the title of his book, as the words of Matthew, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ,” are the title of the subjoined genealogy. Mark calls his narrative a Gospel, and by his authority the same name is given to the compositions of the other Evangelists.

Secondly, The Gospel signifies the Christian revelation, or the system of doctrines, ordinances, and laws, which Jesus Christ has delivered to us, and which is justly called good news; because the great subject of which it treats is salvation, and the design of all its subordinate parts is to conduct us to the enjoyment of it. This is its meaning in the commission which he gave to his Apostles, “to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”† They were sent, not merely to proclaim pardon and eternal life through him, but to instruct men in all the details of his religion; as is plain from the parallel passage in Matthew, “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”‡ The same extensive sense is given to the word, when Paul says, that “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel;”§ meaning, either that the future judgment is announced by the Gospel which he preached, or that the Gospel is the rule by which those who have lived under the dispensation of it will be judged. In both cases, the Gospel

\* 2 Tim. iii. 15—17. † Mark xvi. 15. ‡ Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. § Rom. ii. 16.

comprehends more than a revelation and promise of salvation through Christ. If you read the Scriptures attentively, you will find that there are many passages which require to be interpreted in this liberal manner. According to this view, the Gospel contains, not only doctrines and promises, but also precepts and threatenings. This is generally acknowledged; and, at the same time, a strange inconsistency may be observed in the conduct of some men. While they cannot deny that the Gospel signifies the whole institute of Jesus Christ, they will not allow you to speak of it as such, and without scruple charge you with heresy, if your language deviate a hairs-breadth from their arbitrary standard. There is another and restricted sense of the Gospel, which will be afterwards considered, according to which you must always regulate your phraseology. It has no commands or threatenings; and therefore, to mention the precepts of the Gospel, is to betray your ignorance, to corrupt the truth, and to turn the new covenant into a covenant of works.—But, with the leave of those zealots, we might remind them that they are now retracting what they formerly granted, and binding us to one view of a subject, after their own acknowledgment that it admits of more views than one. The Gospel largely taken has, and strictly taken has not, precepts. Speaking of it in the latter sense, I should err if I said that it had precepts; and speaking of it in the former, I should equally err if I said that it had not precepts. None but Antinomians will deny that the religion of Christ comprehends a law to be obeyed, as well as doctrines to be believed. If the phrase, precepts of the Gospel, has been improperly used, that is not a reason why it should be condemned, since it expresses a scriptural truth, but a reason why it should be used cautiously, and in such a manner as not to mislead. Let us study, with all possible care, to be orthodox in sentiments and language; but let us remember, that when we go beyond Scripture, we fall into the heterodoxy which we are solicitous to avoid. When the Apostle Paul speaks of the Gospel, he is careful to remind us that, while it manifests the grace of God, it also inculcates the duties of morality: “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”\*

In the third place, The Gospel signifies the revelation of the grace and mercy of God to sinners, or the joyful tidings of salvation through Christ. In this view, it answers exactly to its name, nothing being proclaimed by it but what is good news to our fallen and guilty race; and it is when the Gospel is thus limited, that it is distinguished by Divines from the Law, considered not only as a covenant of works, but even as a rule of life. That this is sometimes the meaning of the word, although not so often as some may imagine, is evident from the following passages. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”† “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”‡ In the first passage, the gospel offers pardon, liberty, and consolation to sinners; and in the second, it exhibits the righteousness of Christ as the foundation of their hope. The word occurs in the same sense when the Scriptures speak of testifying “the gospel of the grace of God,”§ and of the “light of the glorious gospel shining into the mind;”|| and when Paul says, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ,

\* Tit. ii. 11.

§ Acts xx. 24.

† Luke iv. 18.

|| 2 Cor. iv. 4.

‡ Rom. i. 16, 17.



unto another gospel;”\* designating that as the Gospel which reveals grace in the free justification of sinners, in opposition to the doctrine which suspends this blessing upon our personal obedience.

First, The Gospel, strictly understood, comprehends the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and the gracious declarations founded upon them. It is the Gospel which informs us, that in relation to us God is love; that he thought upon us from eternity, and purposed to save us from destruction and to restore us to happiness; that with this view he appointed his only-begotten Son to be our Saviour, and entered into a covenant with him, by performing the condition of which, he should obtain all blessings for his people; that in the fulness of time, he sent him into the world to be the messenger of his mercy, laid our sins upon him, and exacted an atonement for them; that in consequence of the sacrifice upon the cross he is pacified, and is ready to receive us into favour; that he has also sent the Holy Spirit to illuminate our minds, and to sanctify our souls; and that pardon, grace, comfort, and eternal life, are given freely to those who believe. It is evident, that these doctrines and declarations may be justly called “good tidings of great joy.” Nothing can be more acceptable news to a sinner, who is sensible of his guilt, and alarmed at the consequences; nothing can be more consoling than to hear that the God whom he has offended is reconciled, and that he shall find a refuge from his justice in the arms of his mercy. You will observe, that in these declarations and doctrines God appears working out salvation for us, without our assistance or interference; and that he appears solely in the character of the God of grace, his justice being appeased, and opposing no obstacle to the emanation of his love.

Secondly, The Gospel strictly taken, comprehends the great and precious promises. “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”† To these we may add the promises of assistance, consolation, protection, deliverance, and eternal life. They all breathe love. They are all expressive of the good will of God towards men. They exhibit under various aspects, his grace accommodated to our necessities. They bless us at present, and give the hope of blessedness hereafter. It should also be considered, that the promises are free in this sense, that nothing is required but that we should embrace them; and that if a certain state of mind must precede the performance of some promises, which in this view may be considered as conditional, it is produced in us by the grace which is held out to us in others.

Thirdly, The Gospel strictly taken, comprehends the free offer of Christ and salvation. As God gave him in his incarnation and mission, so he still gives him to all in the gospel; that is, he exhibits him as a Saviour, and authorizes sinners to believe in him. There is no exception made of persons on account of their country, their parentage, their profession, their rank in society, or even on account of the number and degree of their sins. Every descendant of Adam is at liberty to claim an interest in the common salvation, the most illiterate, the meanest, the most unworthy. All are made welcome to Christ, both by himself and by his Father. “My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.”‡ “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”§ The universality of the offer

\* Gal. i. 6.

† Heb. viii. 10—12.

‡ John vi. 32, 33.

§ Matth. xi. 28.

is a proof of its freeness; which is further manifest from the consideration that no conditions are prescribed, no equivalent is demanded, nothing is required, but our acceptance of the gift. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."\* God appears in the character of a generous benefactor, who gives all and receives nothing in return, except such expressions of our gratitude as are prompted by his own Spirit.

Lastly, The Gospel strictly taken, comprehends the earnest and affectionate invitations addressed to sinners. Some of these have been quoted. The Bible is full of them, and we find them alone or intermixed with other subjects. "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men."† The object of them is to persuade men to accept the gift which God presents to them, to awaken their attention, to excite their affections, to make them perceive and feel that it is their interest and their duty to comply. So far as they have the nature of commands, or constitute a moral obligation upon those to whom they are addressed, they do not belong to the gospel in the strict sense in which the term is at present used; but, as expressive of God's regard to sinners, and of the sincerity of his desire for their salvation, they are a part of the gospel, and an amiable display of its grace.

The design of thus accurately defining the Gospel, is not to distinguish words but things, to fix the boundaries of the two great divisions of the word of God, and to guard against the danger of confounding them together. It may happen that a person who clearly perceives the difference of the things, does not with equal care distinguish them in words; or that, knowing that the revelation of Jesus Christ contains doctrines of grace and free promises, and that these constitute a different class from its precepts, does not assign a distinct name to each, but sums them all up under the general denomination of the Gospel. Shall we therefore condemn him as ignorant, and a corrupter of the truth? There are persons who make no scruple to do so, not knowing that they at the same time pronounce a sweeping sentence upon the Church of God, from the earliest times down to a very recent date. Our modern definitions were little known, I believe, till the Reformation; and those who lived before it, back to a very remote period, expressed themselves on this subject in language which seems to us to be loose; yet we are not to suppose, that till a century or two ago, no Christian understood the Gospel, properly so called, and that all were in an error with respect to the true nature of the dispensation of grace. Let us retain our more correct phraseology; but let us remember that things are of more importance than words, and not hastily make a man an offender for a word, whose views are perhaps as scriptural as our own.

There are however some modes of expression which should not be passed over without animadversion, because they evidently are founded in mistaken views of the subject, and mix things together which ought not to be confounded. There are many who represent, the gospel as a new law of grace. It is a law, they say, because it prescribes certain duties to be performed by us, as the condition of salvation; and it is a law of grace, because the condition is comparatively easy, faith and sincere obedience being accepted, instead of the perfect obedience which the first covenant required. I had occasion formerly to speak of this system, and to show that it is contrary to Scripture; and I now refer to it, not with a view to refutation, but to lay before you an instance in which gross ignorance of the gospel is betrayed. Those who teach this system, preach another gospel, that new gospel against which Paul declaims with so much vehemence in his Epistle to the Galatians. It is plain that the Galatians had not renounced Christianity, but that they had been tempted, or at least some of them, by false teachers, to conjoin their own works with

\* Is. lv. 1.

† Prov. viii. 4.



faith, as the ground of their acceptance, exactly according to the plan of Neonomians. Now, observe what he says of them: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."\* They had fallen from grace, or abandoned the gospel while they professed to adhere to it, by embracing a doctrine which was not the gospel. The gospel is corrupted by every attempt to introduce works, either as the sole or the concomitant cause of our justification; by representing faith as effectual to justify us, because it produces good works; by teaching that any personal qualifications are requisite to recommend us to the favour of God; by resting our right to Christ, or our warrant to believe in him, upon certain previous exercises and affections of our minds; by proposing any foundation of hope but his atonement and obedience. By these expedients, you convert the gospel which is a pure declaration and offer of grace, into a law which prescribes duties and rewards them. The gospel indeed is sometimes represented as a law, the law which has come out of Zion, the law of faith;† but in those cases a law signifies simply the will of a superior, a declaration of the will of God; or the designation is given to the gospel in its more enlarged sense, according to which it contains precepts as well as promises, and in particular, requires faith as the means which God has appointed for giving an interest in the offered salvation. It is on this account that faith is sometimes described as obedience; for example, when the gospel is said to be preached to all nations "for the obedience of faith;" when the Apostle remarks concerning the Jews, that "they had not all obeyed the gospel," and when he says of our Saviour, that "being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."‡

To sum up what has been said, in the words of a celebrated foreign Divine, "If we take the Gospel in a strict sense, as consisting of mere promises, or an absolute exhibition of salvation in Christ, then it properly prescribes no duty, exacts nothing, orders nothing, not even this,—believe, trust, hope in the Lord; but it relates, tells, signifies to us what God promises in Christ, what he wills to do, and is about to do. Every prescription of duty pertains to the law; and this must be held, if we would with constancy maintain, with all the Reformed, the perfection of the law, as containing all virtues, and all the duties of holiness. But the law, accommodated to the covenant of grace, and, according to it, written on the hearts of the elect, commands us to embrace all those things which are proposed in the Gospel with unfeigned faith, and to regulate our life suitably to its grace. When God, therefore, promises, in the covenant of grace, to the elect sinner, faith, repentance, and consequently eternal life; the law, the obligation of which can never be dissolved, and which extends to every duty, binds the man to assent to that truth; to set a high value upon those promises; to desire them earnestly; to seek them and embrace them. Moreover, since the admirable providence of God has disposed the promises in such an order, that faith and repentance precede, salvation follows, a man is bound by the same law to approve and love this arrangement, and to expect salvation in no other way. He who accepts the promises of the covenant in the order in which they are proposed, binds himself by that acceptance, first to perform the duties contained in prior promises, before he can hope to come to the enjoyment of those which are posterior. In this respect the covenant is mutual. God proposes his promises in the Gospel in a certain order. Man is bound by the force of the law, acting in subservience to the covenant of grace, to embrace the promises in that order. While faith does so, the believer binds himself at the same time to the study of a new

\* Gal. v. 4.

† Is. ii. 3. Rom. iii. 27.

‡ Rom. xvi. 26. x. 16. Heb. v. 9.

life, before he can expect a happy life; and in this manner the convention is on both sides.”\*

Thus it appears that, when we understand the word Gospel in what is conceived to be its proper sense, it does not enjoin, but merely declares and promises. Even those precepts which may be peculiarly called evangelical, do not belong to it; as, to believe, to repent, to hope for salvation; and they can be called evangelical only on account of their object, which is the grace of God revealed and offered in the Gospel. In truth, they emanate from the law. It follows that, when a minister inculcates these and other duties, he preaches the law; and then only preaches the Gospel, according to this definition of it, when he proclaims the love of God in Christ, and the blessings and privileges of believers. But I have shown you that the Gospel has a more extensive meaning; and consequently, that we may be said to preach the Gospel, when we inculcate the institutions and laws of Christ upon evangelical principles.

Every part of the word of God, as we have already remarked, is subservient to the application of redemption, but this office belongs in a particular manner to the Gospel, which is the only means of beginning the work in the soul, and holds the principal place in carrying it on. Every faithful minister, therefore, will preach it; not only because it is his duty to declare all the counsel of God, but because he knows that upon a faithful exhibition of the Gospel depends the success of his labours. It will not be the sole subject of his discourses; but he will give it the pre-eminence to which it is entitled; like Paul, who said to the Corinthians, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;”† and he will teach all the other part of Divine truth in connexion with it.

First, It is by the Gospel that men are converted. From their state of insensibility and security, they may be raised by the doctrine of the law; but it is the Gospel alone which will turn them from sin to God. Mere terror would drive them, if possible, farther from God; while it increased their fear, it would increase their hatred, and create such a desire as our first parents felt, to retire from his presence, and to conceal themselves from his eyes. Nothing will prevail upon a man, conscious of guilt, and dreading deserved punishment, to draw near to his offended Creator, but the assurance that he is disposed to be merciful, that something effectual has been done to appease his anger, and that he will receive and pardon those who, in sincerity, supplicate his favour. Such an assurance is obtained only by the Gospel, which makes known his gracious design, and points to the atonement of Christ, which has reconciled the exercise of his mercy with the claims of his justice. Hence it is evident that the Gospel, considered simply as a moral means, and independently of the Divine constitution, which has connected the influences of the Spirit with the preaching of it, possesses a fitness, an adaptation to the end proposed, which is not to be found in any other part of the Word. The character of God, notwithstanding its intrinsic excellence, will appear repulsive to the transgressors of his law, unless there be added to it the amiableness and the attractions which it derives from the mediation of Christ. Accordingly, the Gospel has, in every age, proved the power of God unto salvation. It was by the preaching of it that three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost, and myriads were afterwards induced to renounce Judaism and heathenism, and to embrace the religion of Christ with the full consent of their hearts. By the same doctrine the great spiritual revolution was effected at the Reformation. Men, indeed, had long perceived some of the corruptions and abuses of the Church of Rome; and when the light of Divine truth began to shine, they saw them more fully and distinctly; but what had the most powerful effect of all, was the doctrine of the cross, the offer of salvation, without the intercession of

\* Witsii. Animad. Irenicæ, cap. xv. §. 9.

† 1 Cor. ii. 2.



saints, and without penance and the merit of good works, through the atoning blood and vicarious obedience of the Redeemer. When the Moravians established themselves in Greenland, they endeavoured to reclaim the rude nations of that inhospitable region from idolatry and superstition, by teaching the doctrines of natural religion; but they laboured for several years, without exciting attention, or gaining a single convert. As soon, however, as they changed their system, and began to preach Christ crucified, the poor savages listened with wonder, eagerly inquired whether what they now heard was true, and believing with the heart, were baptised. For a long period a Church has flourished in that frozen clime, and the dreary desert has been enlivened by the songs of salvation. It is still by the same doctrine that the human heart is impressed. The preaching of the law, or of morality, without the Gospel, is a cold and unprofitable exercise; and what every man who knows the truth must have expected *a priori*, is realized in experience. Virtue is disregarded, and vice is practised, by those in whose ears lessons of duty are sounded from Sabbath to Sabbath. Astonishment has been sometimes expressed, that such preaching should prove totally useless, while the preaching of salvation by grace, which in the opinion of the disputers of this world, tends to licentiousness, should produce a quite contrary effect. But there is no cause for such astonishment. Every man who calmly considers the nature of the Gospel, will perceive that it is calculated to excite love to God, and to engage our active powers in his service; and every man who understands his Bible, knows that it is this doctrine alone which God has promised to accompany with his blessing.

Secondly, It is by the Gospel that peace of conscience is obtained. It is called the Gospel of peace, because it brings tidings to us of the reconciliation effected between God and men by the blood of Christ; and when believed, it dispels our fears, and enables us to look up to him with confidence. Men may talk of peace of mind to be procured by the performance of their duty, of the calm recollections of virtue, and the serenity which they diffuse over the soul; but their ignorance and insensibility are truly pitiable. If they knew their duty, they would feel that they could not perform it so perfectly as to satisfy the demands of an enlightened conscience, and that their best works are attended with such defects as might be made the ground of their condemnation at the tribunal of the Omniscient. It is his voice alone which stills the tumult of the soul. How would it be agitated by the sense of past and present sins, if it had no other refuge than it may find in itself! When conscious of innumerable transgressions and infirmities, and condemned by its own impartial sentence, it is relieved solely by a view of the atonement, and the promise of pardon. It will be found, I presume, that the state of a person's mind is regulated by his views of the Gospel. Those who mingle faith and works together, cannot rise to the confidence of hope but by the aid of presumption; and if their consciences are in any degree faithful, they must be liable to be disturbed and alarmed by every failure. But when a Christian steadfastly contemplates the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, and the evidence that it was perfectly acceptable to his Father, he enjoys peace, notwithstanding his feeling of utter unworthiness; peace which nothing can interrupt, but the suspension of his faith: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."\*

Thirdly, It is from the Gospel that the consolation of Christians flows. Ask them, what soothes their sorrow, sustains their patience, brightens their hopes, and cheers their lonely hours, and they refer to some doctrine or promise of the Gospel. The view which it gives of the character of God is consoling; for it exhibits him as wise, affectionate, faithful, and constant in his

love as a Father, in whose hands they may trust their best and dearest interests, and of whose attention and regard they are never permitted to doubt. In connexion with this view is the equally comfortable one which it gives of his dispensations. Our fearful and foreboding minds are apt to suspect evil in adverse events, to see tokens of wrath in the surrounding scene, to apprehend the most alarming consequences, to think that we are abandoned for ever. But the Gospel sheds light upon the darkest events; and, although it does not explain every difficulty, and substitute knowledge in the room of faith, yet it enables us to anticipate with confidence a glorious and happy result, for it assures us that the reign of God is the reign of love. In one word, the great remedy for the pains and disappointments of the present life, is the hope of a better. Reason speculates about it, and nature desires immortality; but the Gospel reveals it, and gives the certain hope that our future existence will be happy. Its promises are our charter to the heavenly inheritance, which is rendered valid and unalterable by the death and resurrection of Christ.

Lastly, It is the Gospel alone which purifies the heart. I have already remarked that experience has proved, and is daily proving, the preaching of morality without the Gospel to be fruitless labour. The Gospel alone gives such views of the character, and dispensations, and designs of God, as will make a lasting impression upon that part of our constitution which is the seat of holiness; namely, the heart, or the affections and active principles of our nature. If love is the fulfilling of the law, obedience will be best secured by that system which is best adapted to inspire love. The outcry which has been raised against the doctrine of salvation by grace, is often sounding in our ears; and you know that such representations have been given of its tendency and consequences as might lead us to believe, that licentiousness must abound wherever it is embraced; or, if facts extort an acknowledgment that such is not always the effect, it is insinuated, either that the holiness of its abettors is hypocritical, or that it is owing to some accidental cause, which counteracts the influence of their creed. Nothing, it is pretended, is so effectual to secure obedience, as to suspend our hope of eternal life upon it. This is to make religion a calculation of interest, so that they alone will attend to its injunctions who prefer the happiness of the world to come, to the pleasures of sin. But, if there should be persons who prefer the pleasures of sin because they are present, to the happiness of heaven which is future, this scheme can do nothing for them. It has no other expedient by which it might prevail upon them to make a wiser choice. We know that there are many in whose eyes earthly pleasures possess superior attractions, and have so completely gained the ascendancy, that the strongest arguments can produce no change of inclination; and hence it appears, that this plan, which depends for its success upon an accurate comparison, and a fair estimate of consequences, is, in their case, an airy speculation. In this, as in every other instance, the foolishness of God is wiser than men. The Gospel, by inspiring the love of God, creates the love of holiness, from which obedience flows spontaneously, and does not wait till it is extorted by the consideration of interest. It thus gives a charm to obedience, infuses into it a feeling of delight, and ensures our perseverance; for the pleasures of sin will not, for any length of time, draw the Christian aside from a course of life in which he has experienced greater happiness than they could ever impart. The question is not, whether he shall consent to suffer for a time, in the hope of a recompense hereafter; but whether he shall make a present sacrifice, which no sublunary gain could compensate; whether he shall forsake the fountain of living water, and hew out to himself a broken cistern which can hold no water. As no holiness is genuine but that which springs from the faith of the Gospel, so no other is steady in its principle, and will stand the test of temptation. They alone will serve God with fidelity, who



look upon him as their Father, and confide in the promises of assistance and acceptance; and they alone will follow Christ through good report and bad report, who feel the constraining influence of his love.

## LECTURE LXXXV.

### ON THE WORD OF GOD.

On Preaching the Gospel.—The Law as distinguished from the Gospel.—Its use in awakening Sinners and as a rule of life to Believers.—Connexion of the Law and Gospel as means of Salvation.—Use of the other portions of Scripture.—Observations on the Reading and Preaching of the Word.—Necessity of the accompaniment of the Spirit.

IN the preceding lecture, I endeavoured to ascertain the various senses which the word Gospel bears in Scripture. It has appeared that, besides being the title of the four inspired narratives of our Saviour, and being used also to denote the whole revelation which was published to the world by him and his Apostles, it is sometimes restricted to that part of it which contains the doctrines of grace, and the promises of salvation. It is contrary to Scripture itself to call this alone the Gospel, as this name belongs to the whole Christian system; but this is exclusively its meaning when we speak of the Gospel as distinguished from the Law.

It is of importance to be accurate in our language on this subject; but it is still more important to be accurate in our ideas. Much confusion prevails, not only among private Christians, whose mistakes can be accounted for from want of instruction or from the neglect of inquiry, but also among those who, being appointed teachers of others in faith and verity, prove blind leaders of the blind. There are not a few of the latter class who are as ignorant of the true distinction between the Law and the Gospel as any of their hearers; who, accordingly, confound them together, and while they profess to preach Christ, teach a doctrine in which he holds only a subordinate place. It is necessary that a minister should be able rightly to divide the word of truth, to distinguish things which in themselves are different, to state them in their order and connexion, and to apply them to the purposes which they are respectively intended to serve. Nothing is more disgraceful to him, than to mistake one thing for another, and by his bungling manner of handling the word of God, to render it of no effect.

Men may preach the grace of God, but not preach the Gospel. The phrase may occur often in their discourses and writings; and thus the simple may be led to believe that they are reading and hearing evangelical doctrine, while those declaimers are in truth labouring to subvert the Gospel of Christ. However loud and eloquent may be his praise of Divine grace, if a person make it consist in giving us a milder law, in lowering the terms of acceptance, and admitting our sincere endeavours, instead of perfect obedience, as the condition of future happiness; if he represents it as grace given to all indiscriminately, to enable them to work out their salvation; or a grace which it is left to ourselves to receive or reject at our pleasure, which may be lost, and will prove ineffectual unless we lend our aid to it; it is evident, that he knows neither what he says, nor whereof he affirms.

Again, A man may preach salvation by faith, and not preach the Gospel of

Christ. His doctrine is orthodox in sound, but is erroneous in sense. For what is the faith which he teaches? Is it a humble dependance upon the righteousness of Christ, to the exclusion of our own? No; it is what he calls believing obedience; not faith alone, but faith and obedience conjoined; the name of the cause being given not only to itself, but to its effect, out of compliment to Scripture, and to please fastidious ears. You will find that, in this manner, some teachers of faith explain their own meaning. We are saved by faith, not solely as it receives Christ, but as it works by love; or, in other words, we are saved not simply by a living faith, which proves its genuineness by good works, but by faith which includes good works, and derives its efficacy from them. And thus, while sinners are told that they are justified by faith, and so far the doctrine seems to be Scriptural, they are in reality led to believe that they are justified by works.

Farther, Ministers may preach the atonement, and yet not preach the Gospel of Christ. They may admit that Christ died for our sins; that his sacrifice was acceptable to God; that, for his sake, he pardons us; and that to his mediation we are indebted for all the blessings of salvation: but, while they give goodly words, they may hold sentiments which render them in a great measure nugatory. If they teach that our Redeemer died, not actually to reconcile God to us, but to render him reconcilable; that he died to procure the making of a new covenant with us, the terms of which are to be fulfilled by ourselves; that he died to give efficacy to our repentance, meaning that somehow it becomes, through his death, a sort of satisfaction for our sins; in all these cases, they misrepresent the nature, and extenuate the value, of the atonement of the cross. They take away with the one hand what they had given with the other. According to their doctrine, it is not true that the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin, that through it we have redemption, that by it he has made peace; because there still remains something to be done by us, to render his blood effectual for our deliverance from something to be added to it as the conjunct cause of our pardon.

In the next place, Men may preach the privileges of believers, and not preach the Gospel of Christ. They may talk of justification, without referring to the Scriptural faith by which alone it is enjoyed; of sanctification, without assigning the grace of the Divine Spirit as its only efficient cause; of protection by the power of God, and peace and joy; while the protection depends upon our own dutiful conduct, and may be forfeited if we are not careful to deserve its continuance; the peace arises, not from the application of the blood of Christ to the conscience, but from our own fidelity in the performance of our duty; and the hope is not founded on the promises of God, and the righteousness of Christ, but on the recollection of our own meritorious deeds. The privileges enumerated are conferred by the Gospel, and are exhibited in its declarations; but as soon as you disjoin them from Christ, and ascribe the enjoyment of them to any other cause than his mediation, they cease to be gifts of grace, and are changed into the rewards of the law. It is in Christ, in a state of union to him, and solely for his sake, that God blesses us with all spiritual blessings.

Lastly, Men may preach the happiness of heaven, and yet not preach the Gospel of Christ. They may be chargeable with doing so on two accounts, either because they misrepresent the nature of that happiness, or because they do not truly state the means of obtaining it. To affirm that we are indeed pardoned through the atonement of Christ, but that we must ourselves establish a right to eternal life by our obedience, is to preach something very different from the Gospel; although an attempt should be made to qualify the doctrine, and to give it an evangelical form, by subjoining that it is the grace of God which enables us to obey. This is plainly to set even grace in opposition to Christ, as if it were intended to help us to perform a part of the work of sal-



vation, which he claims as exclusively his own. Nor is the Gospel preached when heaven is described as a place of rest and enjoyment, without a reference to the presence of Christ in it, as constituting the chief source of its glory and blessedness. We all condemn the grossness of the Mahometans, who expect a sensual paradise; but even professed Christians are by no means united in their views of the world to come. The notions of many are altogether undefined; but, if it is not considered as a holy as well as a happy place, and if its happiness is contemplated under any view which excludes the love and service of the Saviour, or allows to these only a subordinate place, it is a heaven of imagination, and not of the Scriptures. As Christ is the life and glory of the Gospel, so he is associated with all just conceptions of future felicity. He is the sun of the celestial world.

It is of the utmost importance that private Christians, and especially ministers of religion, should have accurate notions of the Gospel. Truth is one, but error is multifarious. It is truth alone which will promote the salvation of the soul; every modification of error is injurious in a greater or less degree. "If ye know the truth, the truth shall make you free."\*

I have said that there are two great divisions of the Word of God, the Gospel and the Law. Having spoken of the first, I now proceed to the second.

The Law, as distinguished from the Gospel comprehends the preceptive part of the will of God, and the denunciations of his wrath against transgressors. There is a twofold view in which the law may be contemplated—as a covenant of works, and as a rule of life; and in both it is conducive to the general design of the Word, which is the application of redemption.

The Scriptures give an account of the covenant of works, not indeed under this name, but in terms which imply all that it signifies. Considered in itself, this covenant is opposed to our salvation. It prescribes terms which we are utterly incapable of performing, and denounces a curse upon every transgressor. But this is not all. So far as it proves to any the occasion of endeavours to seek justification by their own works, it stands in the way of their final happiness, for it is certain that the attainment of it by such means is impossible. When men, reading in the Scriptures that he who doth these things shall live by them, conceive that this is not merely the statement of a hypothetical case, but the proposal of a plan to be acted upon, and hence, commence a course of obedience in the expectation of success; they turn aside from the grace of the gospel and involve themselves in all the difficulties and perplexities of a hopeless undertaking. They wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. They convert the information, which, wisely used, might have led them to the Saviour, into the means of blinding their minds, and alienating their hearts from him. This is not the purpose for which the law as a covenant is made known to them in the Scriptures. God did not intend that they should attempt to repair what is broken, and to re-establish what is set aside. The design is altogether of a different nature. It is to rouse men from a state of security, and to apprise them of their danger, that they may flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them in the gospel. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." It shows us that we have transgressed, and what are the consequences of unpardoned guilt according to the divine constitution. This is the office which it is appointed to serve, or the relation which it bears to the revelation of Christ. This revelation and the law are distinct; but they are associated for a general purpose, the one being preparatory to the other, and paving the way for the cordial reception of it. The declaration of human guilt, and of the dreadful recompense which awaits it, is intended, not only to vindicate the holiness and justice of God as the moral Governor of the world, but to impress upon his offending subjects a sense of their perilous situ-

\* John viii. 32.

uation, that they be excited to escape from it by embracing the offers of his mercy. As this is the aim of the threatenings in the word of God where they do not stand alone, but appear in connexion with the promises of pardon and salvation; so it is the design of the strict injunctions of obedience, and of the occasional representation of it as the original term of our acceptance with God. It is a fatal error to suppose, that the design is to encourage us to attempt the obtaining of the divine favour by our feeble endeavours. It is to convince us that the terms are so high, that we ought to despair of fulfilling them; so that we may no longer "go about to establish our own righteousness," and may "submit to the righteousness of God." The Scriptures speak to us in the same manner as our Lord addressed the young man, who proposed this question, "What good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" To suppose that, when Jesus said to him, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,"\* he seriously meant to signify to him, that he might so keep them as to attain the reward of immortality, is to suppose that, on this occasion, he contradicted himself, and taught a doctrine which himself and his Apostles have expressly condemned. He adapted the answer to the question; and as the young man was seeking salvation by the law, he told him what he must do, not to encourage him in his error, but to correct it; and accordingly he proceeded to bring his obedience, in which he trusted, to the test, and to show him that it was sadly defective.

Thus you perceive the subservience of the covenant of works, and consequently of those parts of the word in which it is announced, to the gracious designs of God towards sinners. The covenant itself is disannulled, as every agreement is by the failure of one of the parties. The other party ceases to be bound by his stipulations, and has a right to demand that the penalty be inflicted. God does not now deal with men according to this covenant, except in the way of punishment for the breach of it; and the only character which he sustains in relation to those who are under it, is that of a Judge. He promises life to no man upon its terms; but, still demanding obedience as naturally due to him, he threatens death because it has not been performed. Its original sanctions are published, to show us what we owe to our Maker, what we have failed to perform, and what evil we have brought upon ourselves, that we may feel the necessity of another plan of salvation, and may believe in Him who is "the end of the law for righteousness."

Let us now consider the law as a rule of life; and first, let us ascertain what it signifies under this designation. The law, as a rule of life, is the law divested of its federal form, and considered simply as an authoritative declaration of the duty which God requires from his people. It enjoins obedience; not, however, as the condition upon which their future happiness is suspended, but as the homage which they owe to God as the supreme Governor of the world, and the Father of those who believe. I acknowledge that there are connected with it promises of spiritual blessings; but it should be observed, that obedience is not the procuring cause of those blessings, but merely the qualification which must precede the enjoyment of them, and that the reward is wholly of grace. I acknowledge too, that even eternal life is sometimes represented as a recompense of the obedience of the saints; but it is plain to every person who understands the Scriptures, that it is a recompense only in an improper sense, and is so called because it will follow their obedience, and compensate every labour to which they have submitted, and every sacrifice which they have made for the glory of God. We must beware of imagining that, having set aside the old covenant, God has made a new one with man under the Gospel; and that the law of works is revived under a different name, and with some abatement of its rigour, in accommodation to human infirmity. The true situation of be

\* Matth. xix. 16, 17.



lievers does not resemble that of servants who obey their masters for hire, but that of men who obey their Father from love, and who although they know that the inheritance is secured to them, expect in the mean time to be treated kindly and liberally according to their dutiful conduct.

The law, as a rule of life, is subservient to the salvation of believers in various ways. It is the directory of their conduct, their guide in their whole course. It is of the utmost importance to know what is pleasing to God, and we learn it from the law, which is a summary of all our duties. Heathens have no means of ascertaining their duty, except by reasoning and the dictates of conscience; and hence their systems of morality have always been imperfect. It is an inestimable advantage which Christians enjoy, that they have only to look into the "perfect law of liberty," as an Apostle calls it; not to engage in lengthened discussions, but to read; simply to ask, What is written? What says the law? and, whatever obscurity may attend some parts of revelation, whatever difficulties may present themselves to the mind when contemplating them, in consequence of the limited nature of our faculties, and the impossibility of perceiving the link which connects them with other things the truth of which must be admitted,—the moral precepts are plain to every capacity, and nothing hinders any man from perceiving them, but carelessness or corrupt inclinations, by which his judgment is perverted. With respect to some other points, Christians differ from one another; but in their views of the duties of holiness, all conscientious inquirers are agreed. The law serves also to excite them to their duty. Its instructions are authoritative. It not only tells them what they should do, but it commands them. They hear the voice of God in its precepts. A sense of obligation is created; conscience re-echoes his voice, or republishes the command, and exacts instant and cheerful obedience. It accompanies them as a monitor, who speaks although they alone hear, in the midst of company as well as in the solitude of retirement, and says, This you ought to do; that you must not do. God promises to write his law upon the hearts of his people; and the promise is performed when their minds are so enlightened by it, their consciences are so impressed, and their wills are so controlled by its authority, that they make it the rule by which their whole conduct is governed.

Unholy men set no value upon this part of the word of God. The law they regard as a restraint, because they wish to live without any rule except their own inclinations. It appears in a different light to those whose aim it is to please and glorify God, and they are thankful that he has himself instructed them so clearly and particularly. The words of the Psalmist are expressive of the sentiments of all the saints: "More to be desired are thy statutes than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward."\* The commands of the law, its admonitions, and even its reproofs, are acceptable to him who is desirous that nothing may be found in him, on which God would look with disapprobation.

If holiness is an essential part of salvation, the utility of the law is manifest. It is the standard of holiness. It shows what the saints ought to be, and what God has purposed to make them. It is the pattern according to which his Spirit fashions them; and its prescriptions are the means of exciting them to make progress in holiness, to go from strength to strength, to press towards the goal of perfection. Its purity, which to others is a formidable objection, is the reason why the saints so highly esteem it. They love it because it is without a flaw; because it is a true image of the moral excellence of its Author; because it urges them on in their course, and will not permit them to stop, till their heart and conduct exhibits its exact counterpart. Hence they offer up such prayers

\* Ps. xix. 10, 11.

as these: "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way."\*

It is necessary, in speaking of the law as a rule of life to believers, carefully to consider its connexion with the gospel. It is founded upon the gospel; that is, it is given to them as persons who by the gospel have been brought into a state of favour with God, and are in possession of great spiritual privileges. This is supposed to be taught by the preface to the ten commandments which were promulgated to the Israelites from Sinai; "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."† The fact, it has been observed, brought forward as the reason or motive of our obedience, is that the Lawgiver is our Lord and Redeemer, or stands in a saving relation to us.‡ Thus the preface is explained by our Church; but to establish this view of the words, it would be necessary to ascertain the precise nature of the transaction at Sinai; a subject of difficult discussion, and in determining which, even those who are called orthodox are by no means agreed. The difficulty is certainly not lessened by a passage in the writings of Paul, which imports that the law given at that time, might be conceived to have set aside the promise made to Abraham of salvation through his illustrious seed;§ a supposition for which it does not appear that there would have been any ground, if it had been known to be a publication of the covenant of grace. The words under consideration may be understood simply to import, that, since God had revealed himself to the Israelites in preference to other nations, and had rescued them from the hands of their enemies, they should pay a sacred regard to his commands. Whatever view we may take of the preface to the law, we are certain that, as a rule of life, it emanates from the God of love, and calls upon believers to perform obedience in testimony of their gratitude for his goodness. A distinction which has been often made may be mentioned, because it expresses an important truth, that the law is not given to believers that they may live by it, but that they are to obey it, because they already live. When more plainly and fully expressed, the sentiment is, that obedience is not enjoined upon believers, that they may obtain the favour of God and eternal life; but they are required to obey, because he has "accepted them in the beloved," and they have the Holy Spirit, who dwells in their hearts to assist them.

The law commands, and the gospel promises. Now, there is a perfect accordance between the promises of the one, and the commands of the other. The promises exhibit the grace by which we are enabled to obey the commands; and we see in the connexion between them, the fulfilment of the humble and pious request of Augustine, "*Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis.*" The believer is fully furnished for every good work. If the law commands us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, the gospel promises that he will "circumcise our hearts to love him."|| If the law commands us to repent, the gospel promises "the spirit of grace and of supplications, that we may mourn as for an only son, and be in bitterness as for a first-born."¶ If the law commands us "to make to ourselves a new heart," God promises in the gospel "to take away the heart of stone, and to give us a heart of flesh."\*\* If the law requires us to "walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord," this is the promise of the gospel, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."†† It

\* Ps. cxix. 33—37.

† Exod. xx. 2.

‡ Shorter Catechism, Q. 44.

§ Gal. iii. 17.

|| Deut. xxx. 6.

¶ Zech. xii. 10.

\*\* Ez. xi. 19.

†† Ib. xxxvi. 27.



would be easy to go into a long detail, but the specimen which I have given is sufficient, and will direct you in your inquiries into the subject.

The law and the gospel are the two grand divisions of the word of God; but they do not exhaust its contents. It comprehends other subjects, which contribute to the general design, and are entitled to our attention at present. "All Scripture is profitable."

The word of God contains a history of the human race from the creation to the flood, and a more particular history of the Israelites, and of other nations who were settled in their vicinity, and with whom they were connected in various ways. The history of the Israelites is the history of the Church, till the canon of the ancient Scriptures was completed; and in the New Testament the subject is resumed. It therefore affords illustrious displays of the wisdom, and power, and grace, and faithfulness, and holiness of God. The history of the Israelites, and of other nations, is the history of Providence; and is interesting, not only as a detail of ancient facts, in which view it gratifies curiosity, but as an illustration of the character and conduct of God as the moral Governor of the world, and in this view it is conducive to piety. There are other authentic histories from which much useful instruction may be derived; but from the manner in which they are conducted, our attention is fixed almost exclusively upon the operations of men, their schemes of policy, the achievements of their power, and the vicissitudes of their fortune; while the histories which we find in the Bible lead us directly to God. The revolutions in the state of things are the effects of his will and agency; nations rise and fall according to his pleasure; the passions of men are instruments wielded by his arm; he permits their wrath to go forth, and sets bounds to it which it cannot pass. This representation of the course of events is new; the affairs of mankind are exhibited to us in the light of religion; and from the signatures of Divine agency upon them, they are calculated to awaken sentiments of reverence for God, confidence in his care, and submission to his will. When, in reading the Scriptures, the mind is directed to him, its histories prove highly edifying; and pious impressions are made upon those who had perused other histories with indifference, or solely with the interest which was created by the nature of the events, and the eloquence of the writers.

The word of God presents also examples of goodness and wickedness in the conduct of individuals. With respect to the latter, they are warnings to us; beacons erected to point out the rocks upon which others have been shipwrecked, as well as testimonies borne to the power and justice of God in their punishment, that others may hear and fear. I refer only to a single instance, that of Pharaoh, because particular notice is taken of it by an Apostle. "The Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."\* The examples of conversion, and of faith, patience, and obedience, are intended to encourage both sinners and saints. They display the riches of Divine mercy in the pardon of transgressors, that those who are awakened may not despair; and they show that the grace of God has been sufficient for his people in past ages, that by its aid they have resisted powerful temptations, and have been enabled to perform difficult duties, that others may be excited to tread in their steps. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, a short account of the ancient worthies who by their faith and their works had glorified God, is concluded with this exhortation: "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."†

The miracles recorded in Scripture tend to exalt our ideas of the power of

\* Rom. ix. 17.

† Heb. xii. 1.

God, and to confirm our faith. It is by them that the Scriptures are proved to be his word; for they are the attestation which he gave to the divine mission of Moses and the Prophets, of Christ and his Apostles. The same purpose is served by the prophecies, as it is manifest that the Prophets were his inspired messengers, who foretold, long before they happened, events which no human sagacity could have foreseen, and which depended upon the free agency of men. They serve also to confirm our belief of the moral administration of God, when we see the system of human affairs conducted according to a plan previously revealed by him; and they minister to the encouragement and consolation of the saints, by throwing a cheering light upon the future, and unfolding the prospect of the reign of righteousness and truth in the earth, and of the final deliverance of the Church from the power of her enemies.

The utility of the devotional parts of Scripture is obvious. They present models to be imitated by the saints in their pious exercises, and excitements to cultivate communion with God. The Psalms of David, in particular, have been held in high estimation in every age. There, we are presented with an example of faith and love, soaring to a height which few have reached, even with all the advantages of the superior light and grace of the Gospel. We see the ardent longings of his soul for God; his deep distress when sin had interrupted his fellowship with him, or the violence of men had excluded him from the sanctuary; and his joy when God again made the light of his countenance shine upon his soul. We see how he, and the other holy men whose compositions are found in the same collection, trusted in God amidst affliction, and persecution, and desertion, adored his judgments, embraced his promises, obeyed his commandments, and prayed for his favour. These things are examples to us; "They are written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."\* They are a specimen of the manner in which God deals with his people; they show us how spiritual joy is gained and lost; what is the exercise suitable to the particular circumstances in which we are placed; how we should wait upon God; and what are the advantages of perseverance in prayer and supplication. They are the means of infusing the same spirit into others; and often has the devotion of Christians been kindled by the flame which glowed in the bosom of these holy Jews.

The word is to be used by reading and hearing it, both being appointed to be means of salvation: "The Spirit of God," says our Church, "maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation."† I shall not call in question this proposition, so far as it respects the pre-eminence of preaching; although I must say, that the Scriptures quoted in proof, do not appear to me to establish the point, but when fairly interpreted, to imply nothing more than that God accomplishes his gracious designs by the word, whether read or heard; for some of them relate to the one mode of dispensing it, and some to the other, and none of them gives the preference to either. I acknowledge that more is said concerning the effects of the preaching, than of the reading of the word; although nothing can be stronger than the assertion of Paul, that the Scriptures read "are able to make us wise unto salvation;"‡ but for the more frequent mention of the former, it is easy to account without the supposition of its superior efficacy. For some time after Christ gave a commission to the Apostles, no part of the New Testament was written; and when its books were published, they existed only in manuscripts, which could not be transcribed without much time and expense, and to which therefore comparatively few could have access. From

\* Rom. xv. 4.

† Shorter Catechism, Q. 89.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 15.



the nature of the case, the Gospel was chiefly propagated by preaching, and the references to this mode of dispensing it are consequently frequent. Preaching was necessarily the principal means by which the world was converted, and the primitive church was established; and it must have continued so, till copies of the Scriptures were multiplied, in consequence of the invention of printing. There is no doubt that God has, in every age, blessed the reading of the word for illuminating the minds of men, and changing their hearts; and that many a conversion has been affected, in private dwellings as well as in the Church, by the silent perusal of the Scriptures as well as by the living voice of the ambassadors of Christ. The benefit which the saints derive from the study of them is the subject of daily experience; and they can tell how Divine light has shined into their minds, and their hearts have been filled with peace and joy; how their drooping spirits have been revived, and their impaired strength has been recruited, while they turned over the sacred pages, and devoutly meditated upon their contents. In our own times, the Scriptures have proved effectual to open the eyes of not a few Heathens, and Mahometans, and Jews, and Roman Catholics, and nominal Christians in the Protestant Churches; and from the unexampled zeal to circulate them, which has been recently displayed, and which, there can be no question, is under the direction of Providence, there is reason to believe that it is the Divine intention to make eminent use of them in accomplishing the great spiritual revolution which is approaching.

These observations are not designed to impugn the common doctrine of the superior efficacy of preaching; although, at the same time, I would say, that unless it can be established by scriptural proofs, it is no article of faith, and must be considered merely as a deduction of experience. There can be no dispute that the preaching of the Gospel has been productive of mighty effects, not only at the commencement of the present dispensation, but in all the subsequent ages. The promise which our Lord made to the Apostles has been continued to their successors in the ministry: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."\* It is an ordinance of Christ, which he will accompany with his blessing. It has been, and it will be, the effectual means of awakening the careless, of leading the convinced sinner to the Saviour, of comforting the dejected, of confirming the wavering, of conducting the saints from one degree of faith and holiness to another, till they "come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

There are some peculiar advantages in the mode of dispensing the word by preaching. A minister may be compared to a guide, who points out to the traveller objects which might have escaped his notice, and explains things which he might not have otherwise understood. It is not my meaning that the Scriptures are so dark as to need a commentary, and to be a sealed book to the unlearned. In all matters necessary to salvation, they are plain to every person of common capacity. But the truths of revelation, although they compose a regular system, all the parts of which are closely connected, are not delivered in a systematic form. They are scattered up and down in the Bible; and it requires attention and time to bring them together, and arrange them, that they may throw light upon one another, and exhibit in one view all the information communicated to us on the subject of religion. Besides, there are in the Scriptures things hard to be understood, subjects which are obscure from their own nature, or from their relation to other things, which no longer exist, or are not generally known, and which thus require learned and laborious research. Hence, it is necessary that there should be persons, who are fitted by their education, and bound by their profession, to engage in those inquiries; and at the same time enjoy leisure and retirement from the bustle of the world.

\* Matth. xxviii. 20.

Such a class of men is provided by the institution of the ministry; and as in the primitive times they were qualified for their office by the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, the want of these must now be supplied by diligent study. Thus the preachers of the word are enabled to bring "out of their treasures things new and old;" to lay open the whole scheme of revelation; to illustrate what is dark; to solve what is difficult; to reconcile what seems contradictory; to display the connexion and harmony of Scripture; and to render every part of it subservient to the design of making the Christian perfect. The utility of the ministry does not absolutely depend upon the superior talents of the persons by whom its duties are performed. Suppose that their abilities should not be greater than those of some of their hearers, or should not even be equal, yet the latter may be benefitted by their instructions; because their attention has been more directed to the subject, and they may be well conceived to understand better than others, a book which is their daily and principal study.

The preaching of the word possesses also this advantage, that the occasion, the place, the voice of the speaker, the solemnity and earnestness of his delivery, are calculated to make an impression. Ministers, indeed, however eloquent they may be, can operate only on the natural affections, and move them in various ways; but the circumstances already mentioned have an obvious tendency to excite attention to the truths of religion; and this state of mind is more favourable than the listlessness with which men often peruse their Bibles at home. This, however, is a secondary consideration, which will not account for the success with which the preaching of the word is attended.

It should be remembered that, when we represent the word, read and heard, as contributing to accomplish the salvation of sinners, we consider it only as a mean, the success of which is owing to a power that works unseen. Rational arguments will convince the understanding, and the descriptions and appeals of eloquence will move the affections; but the heart, even the word of God, when left alone, is not able to change. There is no virtue in its terms more than in those of ordinary language. Its subjects, indeed, are the most interesting that were ever presented to human contemplation; but the mind is so blind that it does not perceive their excellence, and the heart is so corrupt that it cannot relish them. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."\*

To ensure the success of his word, God has promised the Holy Spirit to accompany it; and it is his office to remove the veil which hides its glories from our eyes, and the obstacles which prevent its entrance into our hearts. If there is an incapacity in men to discern spiritual things, it cannot be remedied but by supernatural influence; as a man born blind cannot be made to see but by the same power which created the light and the eye. Whence is it that men who have been trained to accurate thinking, and are capable of perceiving the evidence and estimating the importance of religion, do often disregard its truths, and even treat them with contempt; while others of far inferior ability discover the marks of a Divine origin in the Gospel, and gave it a cordial reception? Whence is it that it fixes the attention of the giddy, but escapes the notice of the thoughtful; and that of the members of a family who have been educated in reverence for it, and upon whom its lessons have been frequently and solemnly inculcated, one, it may be, believes, while the rest continue indifferent to its truths? These things, I think, cannot be accounted for, but by the Scripture doctrine of grace, which operates according to its sovereign will; for if the word possessed a power in itself to convert the soul, we might expect the change to be accomplished in every case where the means were used with equal diligence, and the effect to be greatest in those who were predisposed by

\* 1 Cor. ii. 14.



the superior cultivation of their faculties. Upon no other principle can we explain other facts in the history of religion; as, that the word of God should at last engage the serious attention of a person who had, for a long series of years, discovered the utmost indifference to it; and that it should make a sudden impression, like a flash of lightning betokened by no appearance of the sky, but an impression which ever after remains. It is evident that now the time of gracious visitation is come. The man is the same as he ever was, and the truths are the same which he has repeatedly heard; but a new power attends them, by which his attention is arrested, and his mind is convinced. While the word was left to work by its own power, it effected nothing; but now it proves mighty through God, and brings every thought into captivity to Christ. When Paul preached to the women of Philippi, who were assembled for prayer, they all heard; but of one the historian says,—“A certain woman named Lydia heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.”\* And this is the true account of every conversion. The change is secretly effected, by the Spirit of God concurring with the word. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but it is God that giveth the increase.†

## LECTURE LXXXVI.

### ON THE SACRAMENTS.

Definition of the Term.—Their Nature and Design.—Account of them.—Observations on their Origin; their Significancy; how they are to be Used, and by Whom; and the Source of their Efficacy, not Affected by the Intention of the Administrator.

THE word of God read and heard, is the principal mean which is employed for the salvation of men. We have spoken of it at some length in the preceding lectures, and shall now proceed to consider the other means which concur with the word, to accomplish the gracious designs of heaven with respect to believers. However beneficial they are, they are not all of equal necessity with the word, and are to be viewed as auxiliaries to it. It is by the word alone that faith is produced, and the seeds of holiness are sown in the heart. The office of the other ordinances to which I refer, is to assist in maintaining and strengthening faith, and in rearing the Christian graces to maturity. There is no doubt that men might be saved without the sacraments, if they were placed in such circumstances that they could not enjoy them; but we have no authority to say that they might be saved without the word.

As I am now to enter upon the consideration of the Sacraments, it is proper to begin with a definition of the term. A Sacrament is defined to be “the visible form of invisible grace.” Others have called it “a sign and seal of the grace of God in Christ;” or more fully, “a visible sign and seal, divinely instituted, to signify and seal to our consciences the promises of grace in Christ, and to engage us to faith and obedience to God.” The Church of England says, in the twenty-fifth Article, “Sacraments ordained of Christ, be not only badges and tokens of Christian men’s profession; but rather, they be certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace, and God’s good-will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but

\* Acts xvi. 14.

† 1 Cor. iii. 7.

also strengthen and confirm our faith in him." The doctrine of our own Church on this subject, is thus expressed in the Confession of Faith:—"Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in him; as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ according to his word."\* There is a more concise definition in the Shorter Catechism: "A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers."† These definitions, which are virtually the same, are substantially true; but are objectionable on this ground, that they are founded on too limited a view of the subject. As definitions of the sacraments of the New Testament, they are right; but their particularity renders them not strictly applicable to sacraments in general. It will afterwards appear that there are other Divine institutions to which the name of sacrament may be given, besides baptism and the Lord's supper, and even circumcision and the passover. I would therefore prefer a more general definition, and say, that a sacrament is a sign and seal of the promises of God, a visible institution, by which we are assured that the blessing promised will be bestowed upon those to whom the promise is made.

The word Sacrament, which has been adopted into the language of the church, is not found in the Scriptures. Use has rendered it sacred, inasmuch that if any person should object to it, he would run the risk of being accounted profane. He might with propriety be called scrupulous and whimsical, or might be suspected of affecting singularity, but for the charge of profaneness there would be no foundation; because the term, being of human origin, might be set aside at any time, if another more convenient were discovered. Sacrament is a word borrowed from the Latin language, in which it bears different significations. First, it denotes the sum of money which each of the parties in a law-suit was required to lay down at the commencement, and which, being forfeited by the party who was cast, was devoted to sacred uses, and hence was called *sacramentum*. Secondly, it signifies an oath, on account of its sacred nature; and particularly the oath by which the Roman soldiers bound themselves "to obey their commanders in all things to the utmost of their power, to be ready to attend whenever he ordered their appearance, and never to leave the army but with his consent." It is supposed that in this sense it was anciently applied to the symbolical institutions of the church, because in these, we, as it were, enlist under the banner of Jesus Christ, and engage to follow him whithersoever he leads us; and this idea is brought forward almost in every book and every sermon on the subject of the sacraments. I have long been disposed to doubt whether this is the true account of the ecclesiastical application of the term. In the writings of the early Christians it received a new meaning, of which I believe there is no example in the classics. It signifies *a mystery*, as every person knows who is conversant with the ancient records of the church, and as any of you may learn by looking into the Vulgate translation. To give you a few examples: "Great is the mystery of godliness,"‡ is there rendered, "Great is the sacrament of godliness"—"*magnum est pietatis sacramentum*;" for the words of Paul subjoined to the account of the institution of marriage, "This is a great mystery, but I speak of Christ and the church;"§ we have, "This is a great sacrament,"—"*sacramentum hoc magnum est*;" and in the Revelation, "The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest in my right hand," is "the sacrament of the seven stars,"||—"*sacramentum septem stellarum*." This is the translation of the word

\* Conf. xxvii. 1.

† Quest. 92.

‡ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

§ Eph. v. 32,

|| Rev. i. 20,



μυστηριον, which was used by the Greeks to denote not only the profound and incomprehensible doctrines of the Trinity, and the incarnation, but also baptism and the Lord's supper, and especially the latter, which was called ἄγιον μυστηριον; partly no doubt because under external symbols spiritual blessings were veiled, but partly also on account of the secret manner in which it was celebrated. As the heathens had their mysteries, to which none but the initiated were admitted; so the church came at an early period to allow none to be present when the Lord's supper was administered, but the baptised; and Heathens, Jews, excommunicated persons, and catechumens, were excluded. Now, I think it probable that the word *mystery* having been used by the Greeks to express baptism and the Lord's supper, and the word *sacrament* having been used by the Latins assynonymous with mystery, it is in this way that we are to account for its application to those symbolical institutions. The sacraments are the mysteries of our religion. I do not deny at the same time, that the other sense of the word may have had some influence, as there are occasional allusions in the writings of the ancients to the military oath in speaking of the sacraments.

Before leaving this topic I would observe, that what has been said concerning the meaning of the word Sacrament, will throw light upon a passage in the celebrated letter of the younger Pliny to the Emperor Trajan.\* Speaking of the Christians, who are the subject of the letter, he says, that they were accustomed to meet on a stated day, and sing a hymn to Christ as God,—*seque sacramento obstringere*,—to bind themselves by an oath, (according to the common translation,) not to commit any crime, &c. I have no doubt that the word was used by Pliny to signify an oath; but I suspect that he was led into an error by taking it in its usual acceptation, and not knowing the peculiar sense which it had received among the Christians, from some of whom he had derived his information. When they told him that in their meetings they were wont *se sacramento obstringere*, he understood *sacramentum* to be an oath, while they used it to express the sacred supper, in which the disciples of Christ engage to renounce the works of wickedness, and to follow after righteousness and godliness. This interpretation is the more probable, as no other writer has made mention of an oath sworn by the Christians in their religious assemblies; but we learn from Justin Martyr, that on a stated day, or the first day of the week, they did assemble to observe the ordinances of the Gospel, and in particular to commemorate the death of Christ in obedience to his command.† This was the *sacramentum* of which Pliny had heard, without knowing what it meant; and if I am right in thus explaining it, we have here an early example of this peculiar sense of the term.

It is probable then, that the symbolic ordinances of our religion were called sacraments, not as is commonly supposed, in allusion to the oath which the Roman soldiers took to be obedient to their general, but because they were considered as mysteries, on account either of the recondite sense of the symbols, or of the air of mystery with which the sacred supper was celebrated in the ancient church.

In a Sacrament, two things are to be considered; the sign, and the thing signified. The sign is something material and visible, something addressed to the senses; and by this a sacrament is distinguished from other religious institutions. There is no such sign in prayer and praise, and the preaching of the gospel; but these consist in the use of words as expressive of certain truths, and certain sentiments and affections of the mind. The thing signified is the privilege or blessing, of which the sign reminds and assures us, and which it represents by its nature, its use, the form of administering it, or by positive institution, in consequence of which both are associated in our thoughts. The

\* Plin. Epist. Lib. ii. 10.

† Justin. Mart. Apolog. Second.

typical ordinances of the law thus far resembled sacraments, that they exhibited a sign by which something spiritual was signified; but they differed from them in this respect, that they were not confirmations of the promises, but adumbrations of future events, figurative representations of the future ratification of the covenant by the sufferings and death of the Messiah. The form of a sacrament is by some made to consist in the words which accompany the administration of it, but seems to be more accurately stated by others to consist in the union established between the sign and the thing signified, by the divine institution or promise. This union implies three things; that the sign becomes significant, whereas it would otherwise have conveyed no idea of any thing but itself; that it assures us of the blessing or privilege which it represents; and that it actually exhibits the blessing to be enjoyed by those who rightly use the sacrament. From this union arises what has been called sacramental phraseology, or, certain expressions in which the names of the sign and the thing signified are exchanged. Thus, the name of the sign is given to the thing signified, when Christ is called "our passover;"\* and the name of the thing signified is given to the sign, when the bread is called the body of Christ. The foundation of this interchange is the sacramental union, which so couples them together that the one may be predicated of the other. In the same manner the union of the two natures in the person of Christ gives rise to those propositions, in which the properties of one nature are affirmed of his whole person, or even of the other nature, without implying any mixture or confusion of the natures themselves.

The reason why God has instituted sacraments, is his condescension to our infirmity. "He knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust." Although it is the design of religion to withdraw us from the government of our senses, yet since it does not propose to make us totally different creatures, and since, from our natural constitution, our senses have a powerful and necessary influence upon us, he has been pleased to render them subservient to the purposes of religion. What we hear does often awaken very strong emotions in our minds; but it is an old remark, that the impressions of the eye are more vivid than those of the ear

*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures,  
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.†*

"If thou wert an incorporeal being," says Chrysostom, "God would have delivered his gifts to thee naked and incorporeal; but since thy soul is connected with a body, he has delivered things intellectual by sensible signs." When we are disposed to doubt what we hear, the sacraments present themselves to our eyes, and are put into our hands, to assure us by our sight, and touch, and taste, that what the word has told us is true. The word speaks to all; but the sacraments single out individuals, and assure them that, if they are used aright, the blessings which they represent belong to them in particular. In contracts or covenants between man and man, it has been an ancient practice for the parties to ratify them with their respective seals. God entering into covenant with us, has added sacraments as seals for the confirmation of it, not to bind himself more strongly, as if it had been possible that he should retract; but to give a pledge of the performance of the promises, which should be satisfactory to us, because conformable to our usages. If our faith were perfect, we may presume that sacraments would not be necessary. They are therefore, as I have said, an accommodation to our infirmity.

Before I proceed to make other observations upon the nature and design of sacraments, I shall briefly give an account of those which God has annexed to the covenants into which he has entered with mankind.

\* 1 Cor. v. 7.

† Horat. Ars Poet.



A learned author has supposed that there were four seals or sacraments of the covenant made with our first parent, and that these were the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, paradise, the Sabbath, and the tree of life.\* I apprehend that in representing them as so many, he has consulted imagination more than judgment. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is entirely out of the question, because it was the subject of the condition of the covenant, which is manifestly a thing totally different from a seal. Paradise and the Sabbath are equally objectionable, because Adam enjoyed both while he was performing the condition; and it would be absurd to suppose his right to the promised reward to have been confirmed by a sacrament, before his course of obedience was completed. If there was a seal of the covenant, Adam, while the trial was going on, could only be permitted to look at it as a pledge that the blessing would be bestowed when the trial was finished. But he was in possession of paradise; and the Sabbath, with its holy exercises and heavenly delights, was made for him. It remains, therefore, that the tree of life alone can be considered as a sacrament or seal; and that it may be viewed in this light, we may infer from the reason assigned for his expulsion from the garden, "lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever;"† words which import that the tree was an emblem of the life which he should have enjoyed had he completed his course of obedience, and that by eating its fruit his title would have been confirmed. Having transgressed the covenant, he had no right to the seal, and he was removed from its vicinity, lest he should have dared to profane it.

The next covenant of God with the human race was made after the flood, when he promised that water should not again cover the earth. Strictly this was not a covenant, because there was no stipulation; nothing was prescribed to man to be done, and the performance of the promise depended solely upon the faithfulness of God. But the original word is used with considerable latitude, to denote not only a covenant, properly so called, but a promise or a divine institution even when it relates to inanimate things. Thus God speaks of his "covenant of the day and of the night."‡ "I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token" or sign "of the covenant: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth."§ The rainbow was the sign, or seal, or sacrament, of this covenant, for these words mean the same thing. Some have very unnecessarily perplexed themselves with inquiring how the rainbow could be a sign, if Noah had formerly seen it; and if he had never seen it before, how we shall account for it not having appeared, as the natural causes of it must have existed from the beginning. There is no doubt, that if there were clouds before the deluge, there must have been rainbows, unless they had been prevented by a miracle, the supposition of which is absurd. But there was no reason for preventing them from being formed at an earlier period; because it is not necessary to constitute any thing a sign, that it should be new. We may presume that the tree of life stood in the garden of Eden before God made a covenant with Adam, that it existed before it was a seal; so likewise did the rainbow; but while formerly it was only a natural phenomenon, it henceforth was appropriated to a sacred use, and acquired a new signification. When we see it in the heavens, we ought to remember that it ratifies the ancient promise, that mankind shall not again suffer the punishment which was inflicted upon the inhabitants of the antediluvian world.

The covenant which God made with Abraham and his posterity was con-

\* Witsius de Œconom. Fed. Lib. I. cap. vi.

† Jer. xxxiii. 20.

‡ Gen. iii. 22.

§ Gen. ix. 11—13.

firmed by circumcision. "Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you."\* To this the passover was afterwards added at the time of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, if, as it is commonly accounted, it was a seal of the covenant of God with them as his peculiar people. "It shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth; for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year."† The particular consideration of these I shall reserve to another opportunity. They were abolished with the system to which they belonged; but the new dispensation is not destitute of the usual appendage of sacraments. They are equally necessary as formerly to confirm the promises of God, and to promote the consolation of his people; and they constitute a part of the system of religious worship which Jesus Christ has given to his church. The two sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's Supper, which will be afterwards considered. An explanation of their nature, and the discussion of the controversies to which they have given rise, will lead us into a detail which will occupy several lectures.

In the remainder of this lecture, I shall lay before you some general observations upon sacraments, with a view to illustrate their origin, nature, and design.

First, All sacraments are of divine institution. The rainbow, as I have already remarked, must have been often seen prior to the flood; but then it was merely an object of wonder to the ignorant, and of curious inquiry to men of science. Nothing was indicated by it, but that the sun was shining in one quarter of the heavens, and in the opposite region there were clouds, which refracted and reflected his rays. It was the divine institution which made it significant, and converted it into an assurance of protection by almighty power from a universal inundation. From the same source, the tree of life, and the sacraments of the Old and the New Testament, derived their symbolical meaning and their authority. Had not God set them apart to a religious use, the tree of life would have conveyed no more information to Adam, than any other tree in the garden; and the elements in the Christian sacraments would have afforded as little support to our faith, as the water with which we daily wash our hands, and the bread and wine which we use at our ordinary meals. And here I may mention by the way, what I omitted in its proper place, and the sacraments of the Christian Church, furnish a proof that the sign or seal of a covenant is not necessarily a new thing; for nothing is more common than the substances employed as figures or emblems, and they are used in the same manner as in the ordinary occasions of life. In every covenant between God and man he makes the promise, and therefore he only can confirm it. It would be high presumption in any person to come forward with his devices in aid of the divine faithfulness; because his interposition would imply, either that the word of God was not worthy of credit in itself, or that he was acquainted with an expedient to make its truth more apparent, and to remove the doubts and suspicions which the human mind is too apt to entertain. Hence we condemn the conduct of the Church of Rome, which has multiplied the number of the sacraments to seven, while no man, who takes the Scripture as his guide, can find any more than two. The authority of man has here intruded into the exclusive province of God. However august and sacred these additional sacraments may be in the eyes of the deluded votaries of ignorance and superstition, it is certain that they represent no grace, and can convey no blessing, and ought to be considered as bold corruptions of the purity and simplicity of the Christian ritual.

Secondly, The signs which God has appointed to ratify his covenant are

\* Gen. xvii. 11.

† Exod. xiii. 9, 10.



significant; that is, they are fitted by their nature and qualities to represent the blessings which he has promised to bestow. The bow is never seen but in the time of rain, or when there are watery clouds in the sky; and it is a sure sign that the clouds, which have overspread the heavens, are passing away, and that the sun is again looking forth upon the earth. Thus it is naturally adapted to the purpose of its constitution, which is to declare that a second deluge is not to be apprehended. The tree of life, whatever it was, no doubt produced excellent fruit; and although, amidst the ravings of folly, nothing is more absurd than the supposition that it possessed a virtue to make men immortal, yet, from its nutritious and invigorating quality, it was an expressive emblem of the immortality which Adam would have enjoyed through the will and power of his Creator. Water, which purifies our bodies and our garments from the filth which they have contracted, is a lively figure in baptism of the influences of the Holy Spirit, which wash our souls from sin, so often represented under the image of uncleanness. Nothing could have been more properly chosen to signify the efficacy of our Saviour's atonement, in giving life and joy to our souls, than bread, the staff of life, and wine, the exhilarating and strengthening quality of which was expressed in an ancient parable, where it is said "to cheer God and men." Hence you see with what wisdom the signs and seals of God's covenants have been selected. They are not altogether arbitrary, so that no connexion subsists between them and the things which they signify, but what arises from positive institution. There is an analogy or resemblance, in consequence of which the signs remind us of the blessings exhibited by them, without any effort of ingenuity on our part. Thus our senses minister to our salvation. We are necessarily conversant with material objects, and it is a gracious provision which has given them a meaning and a use, by which our thoughts are led to heavenly objects. Nature becomes the image of grace; and the impressions of external things, under the plastic power of religion, spiritualize our minds, and promote the interests of the divine life in our souls.

Thirdly, The signs or seals which God has annexed to his covenants, are assurances on his part that the blessings promised in them shall be enjoyed. This is their proper design. They are intended for the satisfaction of those with whom the covenants are made. God speaks thus of the rainbow, "And the bow shall be in the clouds; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."\* Accommodating his language to our conceptions, he represents the bow as a token which would remind him of his covenant, while the meaning evidently is, that the bow would remind us of it; and that, as long as it appears in the sky, we have no reason to fear that his promise will fail. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are securities to those who have a right to them, that they shall enjoy the privileges which the ordinances respectively exhibit. The one declares that God gives them his Spirit as a purifier, to cleanse their souls from sin, and to prepare them for the kingdom of heaven; and the other seals their interest in the death of Christ, and their title to its precious fruits. We may remark by the way, that the doctrine of the Church of Rome, according to which there is a conversion of the bread and wine in the Eucharist into the body and blood of our Saviour, destroys the essence of a sacrament, which is a visible sign of an invisible grace. Transubstantiation gives us the thing signified, and leaves only a false appearance of the sign. The Lord's Supper, in the Church of Rome, is therefore no sacrament at all. The sacraments of the new covenant are not the promised blessings themselves, but symbolical representations of them; nor does it appear, although the common opinion and the common way of explaining them are different, that they are properly designed to communicate the blessings of the covenant, but that their office is to

\* Gen. ix. 16.

assure us that they shall be communicated. The intention of them may be explained by the following words: "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."\* His simple promise is worthy of implicit credit. He might have refused to give us any other security, and it would have been impious on our part to demand it, because, by doing so, we should have impeached his veracity; yet, placing himself as it were, on a level with us, he has voluntarily given the highest confirmation of his word which we could ask from one of our fellow-men, of whose integrity we entertained a suspicion. He has not only promised, but sworn. In like manner, and with the same design, he has first declared his good will to us through Jesus Christ in the Gospel, and then has exhibited his grace to us in sacraments, applying it to us in external signs, and so binding himself to communicate it to our souls.

Fourthly, While all sacraments are intended to be used for the ends of the institution, the mode of using them is not always the same. Some are only to be looked at; some are externally applied to the body; and some are designed for its nourishment. The seal of the covenant with Noah is used by looking at it; and as the covenant was made with all men, in whatever region of the earth they reside, it is placed in the heavens that all may have an opportunity to observe it. In baptism, water is not only exhibited, but sprinkled or poured upon the person; and in circumcision, the sign of the covenant was impressed upon the body. In the Lord's Supper, bread and wine are presented, not to be gazed at with distant reverence, but to be eaten and drank; and in the passover, a lamb was killed and roasted with fire, and the Israelites feasted upon it. It follows that those are highly culpable who are disqualified for using sacraments to their proper ends, by ignorance of their nature and design. Such are they who regard them as mere ceremonies, of little importance, in themselves, although entitled to a respectful observance as institutions of religion; and they who ascribe to them a purpose which was not contemplated by their Author. To this censure those are subject, who imagine that baptism is effectual by the simple application, and regenerates every child to whom it is administered; and those who substitute the Lord's Supper in the room of the sacrifice of the cross, and trust in it as a sort of atonement for their sins. They, too, cannot be excused, who, knowing that the sacraments are intended for use, live in the habitual neglect of them, or at least, of the sacrament of the Supper. Does not their conduct imply that this ordinance is superfluous? or is it a virtual declaration that they do not consider themselves as having an interest in the covenant of which it is a seal? The common apology is, that they are destitute of the necessary qualifications; and in the case of many, it may be true. It is a fact, however, not to be rested on as an excuse, but to be deplored; and it is calculated to excite serious alarm, for they who have not a right to the seal, have not a right to the blessings of redemption.

Fifthly, Sacraments are intended for the use of those alone with whom the covenants to which they are appended are made. The covenant of preservation from a second deluge was made with all mankind, and the sign of it appears in the clouds, where every eye may see it. Circumcision was the distinguishing mark of the seed of Abraham, whom God had chosen to be his peculiar people; and, if the passover be considered as another seal of that covenant, we know that no stranger was permitted to eat of it. Baptism and the Eucharist exclusively belong to the disciples of Christ, as distinguished from heathens, Mahometans, and Jews. Infants receive baptism, as having been admitted into the covenant with their parents; and both ordinances are to

\* Heb. vi. 17, 18.



be administered to such adults alone as, by a credible profession of faith, appear to be the people of God. But it is necessary to proceed farther, and to state that a credible profession gives a right to the sacraments only in the judgment of the Church; and that, in the sight of God, none have a right to them but believers and holy persons. Hence, the members of the Church are exhorted to examine themselves, to ascertain their state and character before they go to the holy table, "lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves."\* As the sacraments of the new covenant ought not to be administered to any person who may not be presumed to be a saint; so, however, favourable the appearances are, if he who receives them is not a genuine Christian, he is an usurper of privileges to which he has no title. In all such cases, the sacraments are like seals affixed to a blank. Their declared meaning is unaltered; but in their present application they signify nothing. They do not, and cannot, confirm the blessings of salvation to the man who does not believe. What have they to do with the securities that the promises shall be performed, by whom the promises have not been embraced? What have they to do with the pledges of our Saviour's love, and of eternal redemption, whose affections are engaged by the pleasures of sin, and whose days are spent in the pursuits of the world?

Lastly, The efficacy of sacraments depends solely upon the Divine blessing, whether we consider them as channels in which grace is conveyed, or as means appointed to confirm the faith and promote the consolation of the people of God. This concluding observation relates to the Christian sacraments, with respect to which strange notions are maintained by the Church of Rome, in direct contradiction to the proposition now laid down. There are two opinions to which it is opposed; that the sacraments, when rightly administered, are effectual in themselves; and that, to the right administration, the intention of the administrator is necessary. Thus the Council of Trent has decreed: "If any man shall say, that the sacraments of the new law do not contain the grace which they signify, or do not confer grace upon those who do not oppose an obstacle to it, as if they were only external signs of grace or righteousness received by faith: let him be accursed."† Again, "If any man shall say, that grace is not conferred by the sacraments of the new law themselves, *ex opere operato*, but that faith alone in the Divine promise is sufficient to obtain grace: let him be accursed."‡ This barbarous phrase, *opus operatum*, which is utterly unintelligible without an explanation, signifies the external celebration of the sacraments. It has been defined by Popish writers to be the performance of the external work, without any internal motion; and sacraments have been said to confer grace *ex opere operato*, because, besides the exhibition and application of the sign, no good motion is necessary in the receiver. All that is required is, that no obstacle shall be opposed to the reception of grace, and the only obstacle is mortal sin. But as sins of this class are reduced by the Roman casuists to a very small number,—all others being accounted venial,—the exceptions to the efficacy of the sacraments which are made by this negative qualification, are quite inconsiderable. Thus the sacraments are converted into a species of magical charms, which work in some mysterious way, without the concurrence of the patient; and the exercise of the intellect and the will, of the rational and moral faculties of man, is excluded. I should think that, according to this doctrine, they would do as much good to the receiver when he is asleep as when he is awake. It is vain to ask any proof of this doctrine from Scripture, for none is to be found. It is vain to ask how its abettors can reconcile to philosophy and common sense the idea, that a material substance, by a particular mode of application, shall produce a spiritual effect upon the soul. It is one of the mysteries of the

\* 1 Cor. xi. 29. † Sessio vii. *De Sacramentis in genere*, Canon vi. ‡ Ibid. Canon viii

church which she cannot explain. If it shall be said, that God has so connected his grace with the sacraments, that it shall be infallibly communicated when they are administered; we have a right to demand some more proof than an assertion, that he has in this instance divested himself of his sovereign power over his own gifts, and committed the absolute disposal of them to the ministers of religion; or, that he has introduced into this part of religion a mechanical process, instead of the moral economy which prevails in all the other parts of it. The Gospel does not produce its effects *ex opere operato*, or by the mere sound of the words in our ears, but by the power of the Spirit opening the understanding and heart to receive it. What ground is there for supposing that the mode of operation is different in the sacraments? or, that here alone these words are not true, “Neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase?”\* In opposition to this absurd and impious tenet, we maintain that sacraments do not work grace physically, as if they possessed some intrinsic energy; but morally and hyper-physically, as signs and seals which God accompanies with his blessing. The doctrine of our Church, as declared in its standards, is, that “the grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them,” but “by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit.”†

There is another error opposed to the proposition, that the efficacy of sacraments depends upon the blessing of God, which makes their efficacy and validity depend upon the intention of the administrator. The Church of Rome pronounces a curse upon any man who shall say, that “there is not required in the ministers who celebrate them, an intention to do what the church does.”‡ Now, the church not only goes through the external forms of the sacraments, but means that they should be true sacraments and should communicate grace to the receivers. If a priest have not this intention, the form only of a sacrament exists; the essence is wanting. Great disputes have arisen in the Church of Rome with respect to this intention; whether it should be an actual intention; formally arising in the mind at the time; whether a habitual intention will not suffice; or, whether it is not enough that it is virtual, that is, that the priest have formerly had this intention, and is disposed to have it, although from some cause he has it not actually at present. In one thing all are agreed, that, if the intention is wholly wanting, if the priest positively intends that the sacrament which he is celebrating shall not be a sacrament, it has no validity,—is a mere sign without the substance. In this case the child is not regenerated in baptism, as Papists suppose all children rightly baptized to be; and the bread and wine in the Eucharist are not converted into the body and blood of Christ, but continue what they were. It is not necessary that I should point out the gross impiety of a doctrine which subjects Divine institutions to the arbitrary pleasure of men, who have power to defeat the design of Jesus Christ in giving them to the church, and are constituted the sovereign dispensers of his grace. The priests of Rome have an absolute control over Omnipotence, and can exert it in the miracle of transubstantiation, or restrain it, according to their perverse inclinations. It was never pretended that the intention of the preacher is necessary to give efficacy to the word; and it is altogether arbitrary to suppose it to be necessary to the efficacy of the sacraments. As the latter were instituted by God and not by men, nothing besides his blessing can rationally be conceived to be requisite to accomplish their design, but the administration of them according to the prescribed form. The intention of the administrator has as little to do with the effect, as the intention of the physician has with the success of the medicine which he gives to his patient, or the intention of the husbandman

\* 1 Cor. iii. 7.

† Conf. xxvii. 3. Sh. Cat. Q. 91.

‡ Con. Trid. Ses. vii. *de Sac. in gen.* can. xi.



with the fertility of the soil. God has not suspended our salvation upon the precarious volition of other men, over whom we have no power.

The consequences of this doctrine are perplexing and alarming in the highest degree to the members of the Church of Rome. As it is impossible to know the intention of their priests, they can never be certain that they have received any of the sacraments. It is possible that they have not been baptized and therefore cannot be saved. If an unbaptized person is made a priest, all his actions in that character are invalid; all the sacraments which he administers are vain ceremony. If he is a bishop, those whom he ordains are not priests; and if he is Pope, the bishops whom he consecrates have no more power than laymen. No Papist can tell whether the elements in the Eucharist have been transubstantiated or not; and, for aught that he knows, they are simple bread and wine, and in adoring them, he is upon his own principle guilty of idolatry. In short, according to the doctrine of intention, the Church of Rome may be no Church, and the Pope, the bishops, and the priests, may all be usurpers of offices to which they have no title. Let them relieve themselves from this difficulty as they can; they have made the snare in which they are caught. We believe that "the efficacy of a sacrament does not depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it, but upon the work of the Spirit and the word of institution."\*

## LECTURE LXXXVII.

### ON THE SACRAMENTS.

Consequences of the Popish Doctrine concerning the Intention of the Priest in Sacraments.—The Sacraments of the Mosaic Dispensation.—Circumcision, its Origin, From and Import.—The passover, Proof that it was a Sacrament; its Form and Significancy.—The Jewish Superseded by the Christian Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.—The Five Spurious Sacraments of the Church of Rome.

IN the last lecture, I explained the nature of sacraments, and made some general observations upon them. My last observation was, that the efficacy of sacraments depends upon the blessing of God, and it was opposed to two errors of the Church of Rome, that sacraments communicate grace *ex opere operato*, or by the mere administration of them, without any exercise of mind on the part of the receiver, if he is not in mortal sin; and that the intention of the priest to do what the church does, is indispensably necessary to give them validity. We have seen, that as the latter opinion is unscriptural and impious, so it involves its abettors in the most painful uncertainty, and is an engine powerful enough to overturn the whole fabric of their church. It is possible that, from the want of intention in their present priests, they have no sacraments; and that, from the same want in a former race of them, their present priests are not priests, their bishops are not bishops, their pope is not the vicar of Christ. Their religious offices may be performed by men who have not been baptized, and therefore are not Christians; and they may be daily guilty of the grossest idolatry in worshipping bread and wine, which they suppose to be the body and blood of our Saviour. If it should be said that it is altogether incredible, that a whole generation of priests should conspire to defeat the design of the sacraments, still, the uncertainty remains with respect to in-

\* Conf. xxvii. 3.

dividual cases. How does any man know, that the priest who baptized him had the proper intention, or that the priest had it, by whom that priest was baptized? If there was a single failure in the line of succession, from the Apostles down to the present time, all that followed were unchristianized. Men of different characters may be supposed to have existed in that succession, and if some were upright, others were wicked. There may have belonged to it such priests as Luther met with at Rome before he appeared as a reformer; men who made a jest of sacred things, and annulled the sacraments with a deliberate design. He tells us that, in celebrating the Lord's Supper, some of them, instead of repeating the words of institution, *hoc est corpus meum*, by which transubstantiation is supposed to be effected, said with a low voice, *Panis es, et panis eris*. Bread thou art, and bread thou shalt be.

It may surprise us that the Church of Rome should have adopted an opinion clogged with such difficulties, and leading to such consequences; and it may be thought that she has been drawn into it inadvertently. But whether or not the matter was well considered when it was first made an article of faith, it was not re-enacted by the Council of Trent without opposition. Yet, although the inferences deducible from it were represented to the fathers, they passed the decree formerly quoted, not choosing to acknowledge the fallibility of the church, by revoking one of its dogmas, nor to abandon a tenet so well calculated to increase the power and influence of the clergy. This is probably the origin of the doctrine of intention, and is certainly the reason why it is retained. The great object of the Church of Rome is, to create a sacred reverence for its ministers, and to establish their uncontrolled dominion over the people; and nothing can be conceived more effectual for this purpose, than the belief that they can make or not make sacraments at their pleasure; that they can communicate or withhold the grace of God; that, in short, the salvation of the people is subject to their disposal. Join the two opinions which we have considered together, and you will perceive in both an artful but wicked contrivance, to reduce the minds of men to a state of spiritual slavery under their yoke. The sacraments are effectual *ex opere operato*, or, by simple application convey grace to the receiver; and the priest can make them sacraments or empty ceremonies as he chooses. How august, in the eyes of the ignorant and superstitious, must those men appear, who can open or shut the treasury of heaven; who have power to turn material substances into the body, blood, and divinity of Christ, by a few words, muttered like a magical incantation!

In the preceding lecture, I gave a short account of the signs or sacraments appointed to confirm the covenants which God has made with men. I then mentioned those of the Old Testament, which have been superseded by the seals of the Christian dispensation. The brief notice which was taken of them was sufficient at that time; but it will be now proper to attend to them more particularly.

The first in order is circumcision, which is called the token or sign of the covenant with Abraham.\* It was then first instituted, or at least it then first became significant, and it was enjoined upon the Israelites as a rite to be observed in all their generations. Hence our Lord said to the Jews, "Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision, not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers."† Herodotus affirms that the Colchians, and Egyptians, and Ethiopians, alone of all men practise circumcision. The Phenicians and Syrians in Palestine acknowledge that they learned it from the Egyptians.‡ It is not surprising, that infidels should eagerly lay hold of this account to contradict the relation of Moses; but it is surprising, that persons, professing to be Christians should have discovered a disposition to give credit to the profane,

\* Gen. xvii. 11.

† John vii. 22.

‡ Herodot. lib. ii. c. 104.



in preference to the inspired historian. The account of Herodotus is manifestly false; for, first, he asserts that the Phenicians practised circumcision, contrary to a well known fact, that all the inhabitants of Palestine except the Jews were uncircumcised; and secondly, he says that they owned that they had received it from the Egyptians, whereas it is certain, that the Jews never acknowledged any such thing. Laying aside the divine authority of the history of Moses, it is astonishing that any man should have ever lent an ear to Herodotus on this subject. For what, I ask, did he know about the matter? Nothing but some idle tales, which he had heard from persons as ignorant as himself. It should be remembered, that Herodotus wrote about fourteen hundred years after the institution of circumcision according to the Scriptures, and was therefore totally incompetent to decide concerning its origin.

The circumcision of a child took place on the eighth day after his birth, and was performed by the father of the family, or by any other person whom he chose to employ. While it constituted a visible proof that the person was one of the descendants of Abraham, and consequently was comprehended in the covenant which God had made with that patriarch and his seed, it was significant of certain spiritual blessings, to which those who, like him, believed in God, were admitted. To Abraham, it was "a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised."\* Before this rite was instituted, Abraham had "believed in God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness;"† and circumcision was a confirmation of the righteousness which he had obtained by faith, or of his justified state, and of the blessings and privileges connected with it. God had promised the Messiah to him and his seed, and, along with the Messiah, not only temporal, but spiritual and heavenly blessings; and Abraham, embracing this promise, had engaged to walk before God, and to be perfect. Of this covenant, the sign and seal was circumcision; a declaration to his believing descendants, as well as to himself, that to them the promises belonged, while it implied a profession on their part of their trust in the illustrious seed, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed; and hence to them, as well as to him, it was a seal of the righteousness of faith. We could not conceive the Most High to have enjoined this rite solely for the purpose of displaying his authority. We may not be able to explain satisfactorily why he fixed upon it in preference to any other; but we must believe that something more was intended than merely to set a mark upon the Israelites. Like all his other signs, it was significant, if not by its own nature, yet in consequence of his institution.

I proceed to observe, that as it was a seal of the righteousness of faith, so it was also a sign of the renovation of the heart. This is evident, on the one hand, from those passages which speak of the "circumcision of the heart" as the work of God, and as necessary to our loving him; and, on the other hand, from those which call depravity the "foreskin of the heart," and represent the wicked as "uncircumcised in heart."‡ In these passages, we have examples of what is called sacramental language, according to which the sign is put for the thing signified, and the thing signified, for the sign. The expressions quoted would have been unintelligible, if circumcision had been simply a mark on the body, to distinguish one nation from another. It is plain that it was instituted for another purpose, and that the Israelites understood that a spiritual meaning was couched under it. There was an internal circumcision necessary to render them the seed of Abraham according to the promise, and full heirs of the blessings of the covenant. The New Testament confirms this view of the rite, when describing believers in Christ as having undergone the change which it signified, it says, "In whom also," that is, in Christ, "ye are cir-

\* Rom. iv. 11.

† Gen. xv. 6.

‡ Lev. xxvi. 41. Deut. x. 16. xxx. 6. Jer. iv. 4. Acts. vii. 51,

cumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.”\* To the same purpose are the words of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans: “For he is not a Jew that is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”†

While circumcision was a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith, and of the regeneration of the heart, it laid those to whom it was administered, under an obligation to live according to the law of the covenant, into which they had been admitted. They became bound to observe all the ordinances of God, and to obey all the commands which he had given to his people: “Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.”‡ The circumcised were engaged to cultivate purity of heart and conduct; to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts; to keep at a distance from the world lying in wickedness, from which they were separated by a visible mark of distinction; and as they always carried about the sign of the covenant, to behave in every place, and on every occasion, like persons dedicated to the service of Jehovah.

Circumcision was a temporary ordinance, and was abolished with the other institutions of Moses. Although a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, it was adapted only to a particular dispensation of it, and therefore ceased when another economy was introduced. The council of Jerusalem, after a solemn discussion of the question, pronounced that it ought not to be enjoined upon the converted Gentiles.§ It was not, at the same time, forbidden to the Jews; but it ought to be observed, that it was permitted, and not commanded. For this permission the same reason may be assigned, which accounts for the liberty to practice for a time other rites of the ceremonial law; a concession to the strong prejudices of the Jews in favour of them, which it pleased God to subdue by gradual means. If, however, any converted Jew insisted upon the necessity of circumcision to salvation, the Apostles were no longer tolerant, but condemned the dangerous error in unqualified terms: “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.”|| Hence you perceive, that there is no contradiction between those passages of Scripture in which circumcision is permitted, and those in which it is condemned; for, in the former, it is considered merely as a rite to which the Jews had been long accustomed, and which they might retain from innocent motives; and, in the latter, it is viewed as usurping the place of the righteousness of Christ, and made by the ignorant the foundation of their hope.

The question, whether circumcision will be retained by the Jews after their conversion to Christianity, is not worthy of attention. Some have been so foolish as to affirm that it will, and to argue in favour of it from Scripture misunderstood. They might have proceeded a step farther, and from the latter part of Ezekiel’s prophecies have concluded, as I believe some wrong-headed persons have done, that the temple of Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and the ancient system of worship will be restored.

The passover is usually accounted the other seal of the covenant, under the former dispensation. It must be acknowledged, that we have not the same evidence that it stood in this relation to the covenant which we have with regard to circumcision; and it is rather by inference that this rank is assigned to it, than by positive explicit institution. It is said, indeed, to have been to the Israelites “for a sign upon their hands, and for a memorial between their eyes;”¶ but this seems to be a proverbial expression, importing that it was de-

\* Col. ii. 11.

§ Acts xv.

† Rom. ii. 23, 29.

‡ Gal. v. 2.

† Rom. ii. 25.

¶ Exod. xiii. 9.



signed to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt. It was, in the first place, a commemorative ordinance; and, in the second place, it was typical of our redemption from a worse bondage than that under which the Israelites groaned. For this view of it, we have the authority of an Apostle, when he says, that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."\*

The reasons for which it may be considered as a sign or seal of the covenant, are the following. It is acknowledged that it was an eminent type of Christ. Now, as the Israelites were commanded to make a feast of the paschal lamb, their eating it may be considered as an external representation of the communion of believers in the benefits of his death; and thus it will appear to correspond with the Eucharist, which is confessedly a sacrament. Again, the sprinkling of the blood upon the door-posts and lintels of their houses, is called a sign in the following words: "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."† Although God said, that when he saw the blood, he would pass by their houses, it is not to be supposed that this mark was necessary to enable him to distinguish them from the houses of the Egyptians; and the meaning obviously is, that it would be an assurance to them that they should be safe amidst the general destruction. The passover, therefore, served the same purpose with all other seals or sacraments; namely, to attest the promise of God, to give the Israelites a visible pledge that the promise would be performed. The last argument for the sacramental nature of the passover, is the substitution of the Lord's Supper in its room; for immediately after the celebration of the one, our Saviour instituted the other. This circumstance appears to authorize us to look upon both as ordinances of the same kind, and to conclude that the passover was a seal of the old dispensation, as the Eucharist is of the new.

The following is a short account of the passover. On the tenth day of the first month, the Israelites were commanded to take for each family a lamb of the first year without blemish, and to keep it to the fourteenth day. In the evening of the fourteenth, it was to be killed, and its blood was to be sprinkled upon the two side-posts; and the upper door-post of their houses. The flesh was to be roasted with fire, and wholly eaten with bitter herbs; or if any of it remained till the morning, it was to be burnt with fire. The bread used on that occasion was to be unleavened; and for seven days, they were not to allow any leaven in their houses. They were farther commanded to eat it with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands; and to eat it in haste, because they were immediately to set out on their journey from Egypt to the promised land. Such was the original institution, from which the subsequent observance differed in some particulars. The passover was first eaten by the Israelites in the ordinary places of their residence, but afterwards in Jerusalem; the blood was not sprinkled upon their houses, but upon the altar; and, instead of being in the dress and posture of persons who were about to set out upon a journey, they celebrated this feast in their ordinary habits, and reclining at their ease. This is evident from the account of the celebration of the passover by our Saviour and his disciples.

That this ordinance was significant, like all other seals, partly appears from what has been already said, and may be more fully shown by the following particulars.—First, The animal which was to be used on this occasion was a lamb; by which our Saviour was prefigured, who was called by John the Baptist, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."‡ There may be an allusion to other sacrificial lambs, and particularly to those which were daily offered in the evening and the morning; but we cannot doubt that there is a reference also to the paschal lamb, since we know from the highest

\* 1 Cor. v. 7.

† Exod. xii. 13.

‡ John i. 29.

authority, that it was typical of Christ. Not to dwell upon the resemblance of temper between the type and the Antitype, which is commonly mentioned, and is spoken of by the prophet, when he says, "he is led as a lamb to the slaughter,"\* but which, I believe, was not in the contemplation of the Baptist, who, in the words quoted above, referred to his substitution and vicarious sufferings; there is a circumstance worthy of particular attention, that the lamb of the passover was without blemish, free from any disease or defect. In this respect, it was a figure of Jesus Christ, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners. As his human nature, when born of the virgin, was a holy thing, so his whole life was distinguished by the exact performance of his duty; and he would challenge the most sharp-sighted of his enemies to discover a single flaw in his conduct: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"† Only a pure and spotless oblation could be acceptable to God, and available to expiate the offences of others.

Secondly, The paschal lamb was slain, and thus prefigured our Redeemer, who "poured out his soul unto death." He is called not simply a Lamb, but "a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;"‡ because his death had been adumbrated from the earliest ages by the sacrifice of lambs. Why were altars erected, and priests consecrated, and the bodies of animals consumed with fire? Had God any pleasure in such services, considered in themselves? Was his eye delighted with the sight of blood? or, Were his nostrils gratified with the smell of burning carcases? Notions so gross must be left to the heathens, who supposed that their gods were corporeal beings, and had senses like those of men. The design of all the oblations of the flock and the herd, was to teach the important truth, that Divine justice could not be appeased, and punishment averted from the guilty, but by the effusion of blood. The paschal lamb was a type; and it was slain to prefigure the death of the Messiah, as the only mean of delivering mankind from a greater evil than the bondage of Egypt.

Thirdly, The blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled on the door-posts and lintels of the houses of the Israelites, and represented the application of the great atonement to be afterwards made, to the consciences of men. The ultimate design of this rite was symbolically to teach an important truth, which is clearly revealed in the Gospel, that the blood of Christ, although shed as a sacrifice for sin, will not avail unless it be applied. Had the blood of the paschal lamb been permitted to flow upon the ground, it would not have preserved the Israelites from the destroying angel; his safety depended upon his using it according to the commandment. There were various aspersions of blood under the former dispensation; but there is no reason to doubt that the Apostle refers to that at the passover, as well as to others, when he calls the blood of Christ, "the blood of sprinkling." "Ye are come to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."§ We may apply what was spoken at the institution of the passover, to the subject of the salvation of sinners. As God promised that he would pass by every house on which he should see the blood of the paschal lamb, so he now averts his wrath from every sinner upon whom he sees the blood of Christ; that is, every man who appropriates the atonement to himself by faith, is secure from the effects of his avenging justice. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Having given you a short account of the sacraments of the Jewish Church, I proceed to observe, that they have been superseded by the Christian sacraments. This is plain with respect to the passover; for we have already seen, that immediately after the celebration of it, the Lord's supper was instituted; and an intimation was thus given, that the latter was henceforth to supply the place of the former. Besides, the Apostle Paul obviously refers to the change,

\* Is. liii. 7.

† John viii. 46.

‡ Rev. xiii. 8.

§ Heb. xii. 24.



when he describes the new ordinance by terms borrowed from the old: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."\* So far as the passover was commemorative of the redemption from Egypt, there was no reason why it should be continued when the church ceased to be national, and was to comprehend the Gentiles as well as the Jews; and, so far as it was typical, it was laid aside as useless when that which it prefigured was accomplished. That baptism has come in the room of circumcision, may be inferred from two considerations; that, like circumcision, it signifies our purification from sin; and, that it is the ordinance by which we are admitted into the communion of the visible church. As Paul connects the passover and the Lord's supper, so he connects circumcision and baptism; leading us to conclude, that there is a change or substitution in the one case as well as in the other. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism."† It is evident from these words, that baptism is "the circumcision of Christ;" that is, it is the ordinance which he has given to the church instead of circumcision, and which, when rendered effectual by his Spirit, is accompanied with the internal purification, of which circumcision was a sign. As God said to Abraham, "Every man-child among you shall be circumcised;" so Christ said to his Apostles, "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them."

I should now proceed to speak of the Christian sacraments in the order of their institution; but before entering upon the consideration of them, it will be proper to give you a short account of the spurious sacraments of the Church of Rome. While we acknowledge only two, that church maintains that there are seven; having added to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the five following: confirmation, penance or penitence, orders, marriage, and extreme unction.

The first is confirmation. In the primitive church, the imposition of hands was practised as a religious rite, and it is mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ.‡ It was used in setting persons apart to a sacred office, in working miracles, and in communicating supernatural gifts. After the Samaritans were converted and baptized by Philip the Evangelist, Peter and John, who had been sent to them by the other Apostles, laid their hands upon them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.§ The rite continued to be observed after the days of the Apostles, not only in ordaining the ministers of religion, but in the case of the baptized; and it was supposed that, by the imposition of hands, the influences of the Spirit were communicated to them. It was performed, however, immediately after baptism, and not as at present in those churches which keep up the practice, after an interval of several years, when young persons, having been previously examined, are presented to the bishop. Upon this ancient ceremony is founded the pretended sacrament of confirmation; and in order to render it complete, the Church of Rome has made certain additions to the primitive mode. Two things are acknowledged to be necessary to constitute a sacrament: matter, and a form. In order to find matter, which was wanting in the simple imposition of hands, they have invented a chrism or ointment, composed of olive oil and balm,—the former signifying clearness of conscience, and the latter the savour of a good reputation; and it is blessed by the bishop, who alone has power to perform this ceremony. The form of the sacrament consists in the application of this chrism to the forehead of the person, while at the same time these words are pronounced, "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy

\* 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

† Col. ii. 11, 12.

‡ Heb. vi. 2.

§ Acts viii. 17.

Ghost." I need not say that not a vestige of this mummery is to be found in the New Testament. Confirmation is retained in the Church of England, but it is divested of these superstitious additions, and is not considered as a sacrament. At a certain period children who have learned the catechism, appear before the bishop, and renew their baptismal engagements; when the bishop prays, that God, who has regenerated them by water and the Holy Ghost, and given unto them the forgiveness of all their sins, would strengthen them, and increase in them the manifold gifts of his grace. He then lays his hands upon them, and offers up another prayer to the same effect. It may be justly objected, that the ceremony itself is superstitious, being entirely of human institution; that the qualifications are superficial, as any person may see by perusing the trifling catechism which the young people are required to learn; that it proceeds upon the supposition that they are all already the children of God; that while it assumes what in many cases is false, it is calculated to foster an ill-founded persuasion of the favour of God; and that, having been so grossly abused in the Church of Rome, it should have been entirely laid aside by a Protestant Church, as it has manifestly no claim to an apostolical origin. Unhappily, the Church of England thinks herself adorned, when she wears some of the rags of popery.

The second spurious sacrament, is penance or penitence. In the New Testament, Christians are commanded to "confess their faults one to another;"\* but not a word is said about confession to a priest. In the early ages of the church, a public confession of their sins was required from those who were guilty of great offences, particularly of apostasy; and this was a necessary step to their restoration to the fellowship of the church, from which they had been excluded. This practice being found inconvenient, private confession was introduced; and penitents were required to come to the bishop, or to a priest appointed for the purpose. It would be tedious to trace all the changes which took place in this part of ecclesiastical discipline; and to show how the penance enjoined upon offenders was made private, as well as their confessions; how instead of penance prayers were substituted, so many prayers for example, instead of so many days of fasting; and how the rich were permitted to purchase an exemption, by giving alms to the poor and the church. It is sufficient to observe, that in the Church of Rome auricular confession is established; that is, every member of that church is required to make confession to a priest at least once a year. In doing so, he is bound to act candidly and freely, to conceal nothing, but to make known to the confessor all the sins which he has committed since he last appeared before him, and even the secret thoughts of his heart. It is easy to see that this institution invests the clergy with an uncontrolled power over the laity; for nothing gives one man a firmer hold of another, than his knowledge of such parts of the conduct of the other as he should most anxiously wish to conceal. There is a security, indeed, provided in the secrecy which is enjoined upon confessors, who are forbidden under the severest penalty to reveal any thing which has been disclosed to them; but still the reflection that the penitent has deposited in the bosom of the priest matters upon which his honour, and perhaps his life, depends, must retain him in a state of absolute subjection to him. It is the business of the priest to ascertain whether the person is penitent; and here a distinction is made between contrition, or sorrow for sin arising from the love of God, and attrition, arising from an inferior cause, as the loss which he has sustained, the shame which he has incurred, or the danger to which he has exposed himself.† To a man who takes the Scripture as his guide, it would seem that the latter was not repentance at all; but in the Church of Rome, either the one or the other is sufficient. There remains the satisfaction or penance enjoined upon the penitent, which

\* James v. 16.

† Concil. Trident. Sessio xiv. *De Penitentia*, cap. iv.



consists in fasting, but rendered as easy as possible; in repeating a number of prayers, which it seems Papists consider as a punishment; or in some other thing which may be performed without a single sentiment or feeling of piety. The sacrament of penitence consists, like every other sacrament, of two parts, the matter and the form. The matter is the confession of the penitent to the priest, his contrition, and his satisfaction. The form is in these words pronounced by the priest, "I absolve thee," &c.\* You will observe to what a wretched shift Papists are driven to make out a sacrament. There is no visible sign in this sacrament, but words and feelings of the mind; and the performance of certain acts is, with palpable absurdity, converted into the matter of it. Prayer might be made the matter of a sacrament with equal propriety. The form is impious and blasphemous; and when a worthless priest presumes to give absolution, we may indignantly say, "Who can forgive sins but God?" The whole is comparatively a modern invention, and is no more entitled to be accounted an ordinance of Christ, than the feat of a mountebank, or the trick of a juggler.

The third sacrament is called the sacrament of orders, because it relates to the consecration of the different orders of office-bearers in the church. Of those in the Roman hierarchy there are seven,—porters or door-keepers, readers, exorcists, acolytes, sub-deacons, deacons, and priests. To these some add an eighth, the order of bishops; but others consider it not as a distinct order, but as a higher degree of the priesthood. As Jesus Christ has appointed certain persons to perform the public offices of religion, so there is a prescribed form of setting them apart, which we learn from the practice of the Apostles. They ordained ministers and deacons by prayer, and the imposition of hands. This was the simple form used by them, and it continued for a long time to be observed without any superstitious addition. If, in the first age, the imposition of hands was accompanied with the communication of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, it simply denoted, after miracles had ceased, the designation of the person; and prayer was offered up for the divine blessing upon him and his labours. In this manner he was devoted to God, and received authority to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, or to care for the poor and take part in the government of the church, according to the nature of the office with which he was invested. In process of time, when men began to corrupt the ordinances of the gospel, under the pretext of adorning them and rendering them more august, various ceremonies were introduced, by which the original simplicity of the form was destroyed. In the Church of Rome, the plan was adopted of delivering to a priest the sacred vessels,—the paten and the chalice, or the plate and the cup,—and accompanying this action with certain words empowering him to celebrate mass, and offer sacrifice to God; and thus they have contrived what they deem the essential parts of a sacrament. In the ordination of a priest, the *matter* is the vessels which are delivered to him, and the *form* is the pronouncing of these words, "Take thou authority to offer up sacrifices to God, and to celebrate masses both for the dead and for the living, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." You will observe that this sacrament is wholly a human invention; men have contrived both the matter and the form, for of neither is there the slightest vestige in the New Testament. It rests entirely upon the decrees of popes and popish councils, who have no more power to appoint new means of grace, and new seals of the covenant, than the first person whom we shall meet in the streets. There is nothing which bears any resemblance to a sacrament in the apostolical form of ordination. Prayer is a simple act of religious worship; and the imposition of hands is no more a sacramental action in this case, than it was in the performance of miracles, when it was occasioned, but not uniformly used.

\* Concil. Trident. Sess. xiv. cap. iii.

The fourth spurious sacrament is marriage. It may excite surprise that any person, possessed of common sense, should have ever thought of giving this name and office to a civil contract; for in this light it may surely be considered, although it was instituted by God himself. Civil government is also his institution, but we do not therefore look upon it as a religious ordinance. The celebration of marriage in this country, by the ministers of religion, does not alter its nature. This is an accidental circumstance, not at all necessary to its validity; and the union would be as firm and as holy, if the law, to which it belongs to regulate the form, should appoint marriage to be celebrated by the magistrate. You may also be curious to know how Papists have contrived to make a sacrament out of marriage, as it does not readily occur to us that it furnishes the essential parts. This business has caused no little perplexity to them; but they have finally rested in this determination, that the matter of the sacrament is the consent of the parties, and the form, the words or sign by which their consent is expressed. Here, then, is a sacrament, in which something that cannot be seen or felt or heard, is the matter, namely, the inward consent of the mind; and consequently an external sign, which is indispensable to every sacrament, is wanting. With respect to the form, it consists in words, as in the other sacraments; but, whereas in those they are pronounced by the priest, in this they are pronounced by the parties. Marriage is therefore an anomalous sacrament, for it is made and celebrated exclusively by the persons who receive it. It is impossible to conceive a more complete mass of absurdity. That cannot be a sacrament which is not even an ordinance of religion, and is not peculiar to the members of the church. It was originally instituted for the human race in general, and all men have an equal right to it. The marriages of Jews, and Heathens, and Mahometans, are as valid as those of Christians. Papists plead that the Scripture calls marriage a sacrament; for, where Paul, speaking of it, says, "This is a great mystery,"\* the Vulgate reads, "This is a great sacrament." But I have accounted for this translation, by showing you, that anciently *sacramentum* was used as equivalent to *μυστήριον*. It is evident that nothing more can be inferred from the passage, than that marriage is an emblem of the union between our Saviour and his followers; and perhaps not even so much is intended, for the Apostle seems to confine the words to this union alone, and to put us on our guard against thinking that he is speaking of marriage, when he immediately adds, "But I speak of Christ and the church." The mystery is the mystical union.

The last spurious sacrament of the Church of Rome is extreme unction. It is called unction, because the person who receives this sacrament is anointed with oil; and extreme unction, because it is administered *in articulo mortis*, when he is understood to be at the point of death. The matter is olive oil, which has been blessed by a bishop; and the form consists in the application of this oil to the five senses, with these words: "By this sacred unction, and his most tender mercy, may God pardon every sin which thou hast committed, by seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching."† The oil is put upon the different parts of the body, as the name of each is enunciated. The person is understood to receive the remission of his sins, and to be prepared to enter into heaven, after having undergone a complete purification in purgatory. If extreme unction were, indeed, an institution of Christ, it would be invaluable as a sure passport to immortality; but if it be a human device, what can we say, but that, to those who depend upon it, it must prove a passport to the place of darkness and sorrow? For this sacrament, as well as for marriage, Papists plead Scripture, but with equal want of success. The passage to which they appeal, is in the Epistle of James: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him

\* Ephes. v. 32.      † Concil. Trident. Sessio xiv. de *Extrema Unctione*, cap. i



with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick.”\* Those who imagine that these words favour the sacrament of extreme unction, allow themselves to be carried away by a sound without any regard to the sense. It is obvious that the two things are totally different. The anointing of James was miraculous, or a sign accompanying a miracle, which, from the following words concerning the twelve disciples when they were sent forth by our Lord, seems to have been frequently used in the apostolic age: “And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.”† But, although the Church of Rome still claims the power of working miracles, we know that the pretension is absolutely false; and besides, it is not alleged that there is any miracle in the present case. The design of anointing a sick person in the days of the Apostles, was to restore him to health; the design of the popish anointing, is to prepare him for death. The one, when accompanied with faith, saved the sick; but the other is not administered till all hope of recovery is gone. It is certain that, although oil was used after the days of the Apostles on various occasions, and was, in particular, applied to the sick, it was not till a late period that the sacrament of extreme unction was devised by the Schoolmen, and the Council of Trent established it by law: “If any man shall say that extreme unction is not truly and properly a sacrament, instituted by Christ our Lord, and promulgated by the blessed Apostle James, but is only a rite received from the Fathers, or a human figment; let him be accursed.”‡

Regardless of the fulminations of the antichristian church, we reject all these sacraments as the devices of impious men; and adhering to the word of God as the sole rule of our faith and practice, we receive only the two sacraments which our Lord and Saviour has instituted, Baptism and the Holy Supper.

## LECTURE LXXXVIII.

### ON THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

Baptism, the Rite of Admission to the Church.—Difference between the Baptisms of John and Christ.—Application of Water Necessary.—Certain Popish additions to the Rite.—Mode of Applying the Symbol.—Immersion not Necessary.—Who may be Baptised.—Baptism of Infants Vindicated.

I now proceed to consider the two sacraments of the Christian Church, which alone are worthy of attention and have a claim to be observed with devout reverence, because they alone are of Divine institution. I begin with Baptism, by which we are initiated into the fellowship of the Church, and which, in the order of dispensation, precedes the Lord's Supper; none having a right to the holy table but those who have been previously purified by the washing of water and by the word.

It has pleased God, under both dispensations, to institute an external sign of admission into the church, and of the participation of the blessings of the covenant. From the days of Abraham to the coming of Christ, the sign was circumcision; but as it implied an obligation to obey the law of Moses, which is now repealed, it is laid aside, and baptism is substituted in its room. After his resurrection, Jesus gave the following commission to his disciples: “Go

\* James v. 14. † Mark vi. 13. ‡ Sessio xiv. de *Extrema Unctione*, can. i.

ye therefore, and teach" or make disciples of "all nations—*μαθητευσατε παντα τα εθνη*—baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."\* Baptism had been previously administered to those who acknowledged him as the Messiah, and desired to be admitted into the number of his followers; not, however, by himself, but by his disciples, as we learn from this passage in John: "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee."† We cannot, therefore, consider the ordinance as new, when he gave a commission to the Apostles prior to his ascension; but it then received a more extensive application, as they were authorized to administer it to men of every nation. Baptism was administered also by John his forerunner; and that which is now practised is commonly accounted a continuation of it. But although they resemble each other in the external sign, and the mode of applying it, there are some respects in which they materially differ. "John baptized his disciples into the faith of the Messiah as to come; we are baptized into the faith of him as actually come. The baptism of John was evidently designed to serve a temporary purpose, in common with all the other parts of his ministry; the baptism of Christ is to continue to the end of the world. The one did not properly belong to the Christian dispensation, but was preparatory to it; the other is an ordinance given by our Saviour to his church, to supply the place of circumcision. Christian baptism is administered in the name of the persons of the Trinity; whereas we have no evidence that the Divine Persons were explicitly recognized in the baptism of John. From these considerations, it appears that the two ordinances differ so much in their form, in their design, and in their relation to the present dispensation, that they may be regarded as perfectly distinct, and consequently, that a person who had been baptized by John might have been baptized again by an Apostle."‡ If this reasoning is just, we are at no loss to understand a passage in the Acts, which has caused no small perplexity to commentators, and about which they have been much divided in sentiment. Speaking of some men who had received only the baptism of John, it says, that when they were more fully instructed by Paul, "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."§ It seems unquestionable that they were rebaptized, and the reason was, that the baptism of John, and that of Christ, were different ordinances.

It is an opinion adopted by not a few, that our Lord borrowed this rite from the Jews, among whom it was customary to baptize proselytes, whether male or female, by immersing the whole body in water. Men view subjects in different lights, according to their habits of thinking; but I confess, that to me it seems highly improbable that he would adopt one of the most solemn ordinances of his religion from the corrupt church of Judea, and found it upon a practice manifestly superstitious, which they had added without authority to the commandment of God. It is altogether incredible that, while he condemned their vain traditions and observances, he would embody one of these in his own institute, and thus counteract the effect of his reproofs. No mention is made of the baptism of proselytes in the works of Philo and Josephus, and the first notice of it is found in the Mishna and Gemara; of which the one was composed at the earliest date in the second century, although learned men in general bring it much farther down, and the latter is so late as the seventh. There is no evidence that the practice existed in the time of our Saviour, and

\* Matth. xxviii. 19, 20.

† Dick's Lectures on the Acts, p. 406. 2d Edit.

‡ John iv. 1—3.

§ Acts xix. 5.



it is much more likely that, among the Jews, it was an acknowledged imitation of his institution, than that he was indebted for it to them.

Baptism is performed by the application of water to the body. This is a point which it may be judged altogether superfluous to prove, because it seems to admit of no dispute; but there have been found fools and perverse controvertists to call in question the plainest facts. Some have maintained that Christ did not enjoin the baptism of water, but of doctrine; and argue that, as Christianity is a spiritual religion, all external rites are excluded from it. It is quite sufficient to answer, that the Apostles did actually baptize with water. But it has been alleged by some who could not deny this fact, that the baptism of water was only a temporary institution, and that it is superseded by the baptism of the Spirit. Let them prove their allegation, for this burden lies upon them. It happens unfortunately for their hypothesis, that the baptism of water was used after the dispensation of the spirit had commenced, and in an age when the influences of the Holy Ghost were most abundantly communicated; and it is a complete refutation of it, that, when our Lord instituted this rite, he promised to be with his disciples in executing his order, not only to the end of that age, but to the end of the Christian dispensation, or "of the world," as we have translated the word.

In the Church of Rome, baptism is celebrated with several other rites besides the application of water. Not only is the sign of the cross made, and the person exorcised to drive out evil spirits, but salt is put into his mouth, to signify that by grace he is freed from the corruption of sin; spittle is applied to his nostrils and ears, to intimate that the Holy Spirit gives light to the mind to perceive the heavenly truth; he is anointed with oil on the crown of his head, that he may understand that he is henceforth joined to Christ as a member of his body, and is called a Christian from Christ the anointed one: if he be an adult, he is clothed with a white garment, or if a child, a white handkerchief is given to him, to represent the glory of the resurrection of which he is an heir, the beauty with which his soul now purified from sin is adorned, and the innocence which he should study to maintain during his whole life. Lastly, a burning wax candle is put into his hand, to show that faith, being inflamed with charity which he received in baptism, is to be nourished and increased by the study of good works. It is well that Papists have explained the various parts of this exhibition, which would have otherwise puzzled every human understanding. Some of these rites were introduced at an early period; but they are all human inventions, which disfigure the simple ordinance of Christ, and have been rejected by our Church in its just zeal for the purity of his institution.

The manner in which water should be applied to the body, whether by affusion or aspersion, or by immersion, is a question which has divided Christians into different parties, and has been discussed with great vehemence of contention. An attempt has been made to decide the controversy by an appeal to the meaning of the original terms. βαπτίζω, it is commonly said, signifies to *immerse* or *plunge into water*, and consequently βαπτισμα and βαπτισμος, are properly translated *immersion*. βαπτίζω is derived from βαπτω, which has the same signification, and is used to express the action of dipping and dyeing. Examples, however, have been produced from which it appears, that the idea sometimes conveyed even by this verb, which it is commonly admitted signifies *to dip*, is that of sprinkling, rather than of dipping. In the Revelation our Saviour is described as clothed with a garment—βεβαμμενον αιματι—*dipped in blood*,\* says our translation, but rather *sprinkled* or *stained*; for he is represented as a warrior and a conqueror, and the garments of such a person after a battle are not dipped in blood, but stained or sprinkled with the blood of his enemies, which has spouted from their wounds. This is the image presented

\* Rev. xix. 13.

ous in the parallel passage of Isaiah, where in the same character he says, "Their blood shall be sprinkled on my garments, and I will stain all my raiment."\* The sentence pronounced upon Nebuchadnezzar was, that his body should be "wet with the dew of heaven;"† and it is thus translated in the Greek version, *Απο της δροσου του ουρανου το σωμα αυτου εβαφη*. Here the word signifies *to sprinkle*, or *moisten by sprinkling*, for his body was not wetted by being dipped in dew, but by its falling upon him.

I do not intend to deny that *βαπτω* ever means *to dip*, but that this is its only sense; and hence we may fairly conclude, that although its derivative *βαπτίζω* also means *to immerse*, it does not follow that this is its only signification. Two examples have been quoted from the Apocryphal writings, in one of which it denotes *washing* without specifying the form, and in the other it seems to be synonymous with *sprinkling*. Judith is said to have washed herself in the camp, or by the camp at a fountain of water, *εβαπτίζετο επι της πηγης του ιδατος*.‡ The place, a *fountain* or *spring*, naturally excludes the idea of immersion, and the phrase is *επι της πηγης, at the fountain*, not *εν τη πηγη*, as it would have been if she had bathed in it. The son of Sirach, speaking of a person who has been purified from the pollution contracted by touching a dead body, calls him *βαπτίζομενος απο νεκρου*.§ But when we consult the law of Moses to which he refers, we find that he was purified by aspersion. That his uncleanness might be removed, the water of separation was sprinkled upon him, as you will see in the nineteenth chapter of Numbers.|| If then the word was so understood by Jewish writers in Greek, we may presume that it retains the same in the New Testament, or that this meaning may be assigned to it when circumstances do not forbid; and that it is unwarrantable to affirm, from the simple use of the term in reference to this ordinance of Christ, that we are bound to administer it only by immersion. "The Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash," or baptize themselves, "they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing" or baptisms "of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables."¶ The washing of the hands was performed among the Jews by pouring water upon them, as appears from the express testimony of Scripture: "Elisha the son of Shaphat poured water on the hands of Elijah."\*\* The "baptizing" after their return from market, probably signifies the same thing with washing their hands, as it is very improbable that on every such occasion they washed the whole body; and at any rate, if they put themselves to this trouble, the body would be washed in the same manner with the hands, by pouring water upon it. There is no reason to think that this baptism consisted in immersion. Cups and pots and brazen vessels may have been "baptized" by being plunged into water; but as the operation could have been performed equally well by pouring water into them, and upon them, we can draw no certain conclusion respecting the mode, and the words *βαπτίζειν* and *βαπτισμος*, convey nothing more than the general idea of washing. The last word in this passage, *κλινων*, is improperly rendered *tables* in our version, and the proper translation is *beds* or *couches*. These were the couches on which they reclined at their meals. They were so large as to hold several persons at the same time; and from their size it seems reasonable to suppose that they were "baptized," not by being immersed in water, but by being washed with the hand or sprinkled, to remove any real or fancied impurity.

Hitherto we have found nothing to justify the confidence with which it has been asserted, that *βαπτίζω* necessarily signifies *to immerse*. But to supply what may be wanting in the evidence arising from the word itself, it is alleged

\* Is. lxiii. 33.

† Dan. iv. 23.

‡ Judith xii. 7.

§ Ecclus. xxxiv. 25.

|| Num. xix. 13.

¶ Mark vii. 3, 4.

\*\* 2 Kings iii. 11.



that such phrases are joined with it, as clearly show that it was by dipping or plunging that baptism was originally administered. For example, John is said to have baptized *in Jordan*\*—*εν τῷ Ιορδανῇ*—standing, no doubt, in the water, and successively dipping his disciples. That the preposition *εν* often denotes *the place in which* any thing is done, cannot be denied; but among its many senses, it signifies also *at*, or *nigh to*. “Now, *in the place*—*εν τῷ τοπῷ*—where he was crucified, there was a garden,”† not in the *identical spot*, but *in its immediate vicinity*. In like manner—*ὁ πύργος εν τῷ Σιλωαμ*—is “the tower,” not “*in the pool of Siloam*,”‡ but *close by it*. It has been remarked, that while Matthew says that John baptized “*in Jordan*,” the Evangelist John tells us that he was baptizing “*beyond Jordan*,”§ and as we cannot suppose a contradiction between their statements, we must reconcile them by understanding Matthew to mean *close by Jordan*, and the other Evangelist, that the place was on the opposite bank of the river. Besides, although John had actually taken his station in the river, it does not follow that he immersed his disciples, because he might have chosen it for convenience, as the number to be baptized was great, that there might be a sufficient supply of water at hand to pour upon their heads or faces.

The use of the preposition *εις* and *εκ* or *ἐξ*, in reference to baptism, is supposed to furnish an argument equally conclusive in favour of immersion. It is related in the history of the Ethiopian eunuch, that he and Philip “*went down both into the water*—*εις το ὕδωρ*—and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water—*εκ του ὕδατος*—the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.”|| Here it is said is an instance of baptism by immersion, as it could only be for that purpose that the Evangelist and his convert went into the water. It is certain that *εις* does sometimes signify *into*, and *εκ* *out of*; but it is equally certain that at other times the proper translation of the one is *to*, and of the other is *from*. When Jesus came—*εις το μνημειον*—*to the sepulchre of Lazarus*,\*\* we know that he did not enter into it; and when ships came *from Tiberias*,††—*εκ Τιβεριδος*,—we do not suppose that they sailed out of the midst of the city, but that that was the place from which their voyage commenced. The preposition *εκ* simply signifies *the point from which*, and *εις*, *the point to which* a movement is made. In the present case nothing more is intimated by the sacred historian, than that Philip and the eunuch went to the place where they saw water, and that after baptism they both left it. A different preposition is used in the narrative of our Saviour’s baptism, and our translators have improperly rendered *ανεβη απο του ὕδατος*, “*he went up straightway out of the water*,”‡‡ because the true sense of *απο* is *from*, not *out of*, and it marks the place from which he went up, without at all suggesting the idea that he had been *in* the water.

There is an expression on which Baptists lay much stress as favouring their practice of immersion, which occurs in two passages. In both we are said to be “*buried with Christ in baptism*,” and hence it is inferred that we ought to be baptized by immersion, which only is emblematical of a burial. You will find the one passage in the sixth chapter of the Romans, and the other in the second chapter of the Colossians.§§ There is an appearance of childishness in thus explaining the expression, which is manifestly figurative. In the Epistle to the Romans the Apostle first says, that we are baptized into the death of Christ, and then adds, that “*we are buried with him in baptism*,” referring not to the form, but to the import of the ordinance, by which it is signified, that through his death we become dead to sin, or are delivered from its power. In the very next verse he expresses the same idea by another figure, when he

\* Matth. iii. 6.

† John xix. 41.

‡ Luke xiii. 4.

§ John i. 28.

|| Acts viii. 38, 39.

\*\* John ix. 38.

†† Ib. vi. 23.

‡‡ Matth. iii. 16. Mark i. 10.

§§ Rom. vi. 4. Col. ii. 12.

says, that "we have been planted together in the likeness of his death." How comes it to be supposed that the one figure refers to the mode of baptism rather than the other? Why should it resemble burying more than planting? What reason can be assigned for laying hold of the one expression in preference to the other, but the desire to support a hypothesis? Would it not have been more suitable to the character of honest and intelligent interpreters of Scripture, to conclude that as there is a mixture of figures, the Apostle did not allude to any external rite, and merely intended by both to signify that baptism is a sign of our fellowship with Christ in his death? Besides, Baptists proceed upon an erroneous idea of our Saviour's burial, into which it is strange that any person should have fallen, who had read the New Testament with any degree of attention. They seem to think that he was buried after the manner of our country, where a dead body may be said to be immersed in the earth, because it is let down into a grave and covered with mould. Had his body been interred, we might have fancied a resemblance between its burial and the plunging of the baptized into water. But nothing is more remote from the truth. The sepulchre of Christ was an apartment hewn out of a rock, the floor of which was on a level with the ground, or depressed only a little below the surface, and which was so capacious that a person could sit and stand upright in it. Here his body was deposited, and was covered only with the grave-clothes. Let Baptists now point out the resemblance between the plunging of the baptized into water, and the burial of Christ. No two things in the world are more unlike, and this silly argument vanishes into smoke.

We have seen that nothing certain can be learned from the original term βαπτίζειν, because it has different meanings, signifying sometimes *to immerse*, and sometimes *to wash*. When a word is used to denote an action which is figurative, it seems a fair way of determining its sense, to observe how the thing which the action represents is in other places expressed. As the water in baptism is emblematical of the influences of the Spirit, we may bring to the illustration of the term *to baptize*, the passages of Scripture which speak of the communication of those influences; and there is not one of them which alludes to immersion. The Holy Ghost is said "to fall" upon men, to be "poured out" upon them; and in reference to the same subject, God promises "to sprinkle clean water upon us," "to be as the dew unto Israel,"\* and that his grace shall "come down as rain upon the mown grass, and as showers which water the earth."† If water is a significant emblem of the Spirit, because it purifies, is it not reasonable to suppose that a resemblance was intended between the application of the water and the manner in which the communication of the Spirit is described? It is by no means probable that God should speak of his own operations in one way, and symbolically represent them in a different way; that he should promise to sprinkle or pour out his Spirit upon us, and to confirm this promise would command us to be plunged into water. There would be no analogy in this case between the promise and the seal; and the discrepancy would give rise to a confusion of ideas. This I conceive to be an argument of considerable force in favour of our mode of administering baptism, and an objection against immersion which cannot be easily evaded.

I may add, that there is little probability that the baptisms recorded in the New Testament were performed by immersion. We have already considered the case of John, and shown that he did not baptize in Jordan itself, but on its banks. It is not very credible, that the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost were dipped. There was a pool in Jerusalem, called the pool of Siloam; but we do not know whether from its size and situation it could have been fit for the purpose. Besides the gross indecency of it, it would have been a tedious process, if all this multitude had put off and put on their clothes

\* Acts x. 44. Zech. xii. 10. Ezek. xxxvi. 25. Hos. xiv. 5.

† Ps. lxxii. 6.



in public; and it is very unlikely that they were plunged with their garments upon them. When whole families were baptized in their own houses, there is no reason to think that, on every occasion, a sufficient quantity of water could be found for immersion. We are certain, that in very few of our houses the baptism of immersion could be practised; and the houses of the Jews and Greeks, we presume, were not better accommodated. Some men seem to believe that, in the Apostolic age, every house had a font or bath; but why they believe this no man can tell, except that it suits their hypothesis. The Apostles could not administer baptism by immersion in every place; so that if this had been the mode, when they had made converts they must have often been under the necessity of leading them away to a pond or river, and, in many regions of the east, must sometimes have made long journeys in order to find one. But there is not a single fact in the New Testament which gives countenance to this idea. The narrative implies that they baptized converts on the spot, and, consequently, that only a small quantity of water was necessary, which could be always procured.

The argument for immersion fails, upon a careful examination. It is founded upon the assumption that βαπτίζω has only one meaning, while it has more, upon a mistake of the import of two propositions, εἰς and ἐν; and upon a fanciful analogy; it is contrary to the usual language of Scripture respecting the thing signified by baptism, and to the general strain of the history, which relates instances of baptism when immersion could not be practised. With whatever confidence this has been pronounced to be the only scriptural mode, the evidence preponderates on the opposite side. We may therefore persevere in our own practice, and assure ourselves that they are lawfully baptized upon whom water has been only sprinkled or poured.

There is a point of still greater importance than the mode of baptism, about which Christians are divided in sentiment. A controversy has arisen with respect to the persons to whom it should be administered; those who are called Pædobaptists maintaining that, in certain circumstances, children have a right to the ordinance, while Antipædobaptists confine it to adults.

There is but one opinion with regard to grown up persons not baptized in infancy, who profess faith in Christ and a desire to be received into the communion of the Church. In this case the command is explicit; and it is because they are so distinctly mentioned, while nothing is said concerning infants, that baptism has been supposed to belong exclusively to the former. "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."\* The qualification in the sight of God, who searches the heart, is faith unfeigned; and in the sight of men, who can judge only by moral evidence, is a credible profession of it, or such a profession as appears to them to be sincere. Accordingly, the Apostles acted upon this principle, as we learn from the history of their proceedings. I select the instance of the Ethiopian eunuch. When this man had heard the gospel from the mouth of Philip, he said to him, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."† The Apostles were sent to teach or make disciples of all nations, by instructing them in the religion of Christ; and when those whom they had addressed had acquired a competent measure of knowledge, and recognized Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, they were then to baptize them. Baptism is not to be administered to a Jew, a Mahometan, or a heathen, who still adheres to his original creed, nor to a man who may ignorantly express a wish for it. It is a badge of Christianity, which would be absurdly and profanely attached to a

\* Mark xvi. 15, 16.

† Acts viii. 37.

person who retained the principles of another religion, or gave a blind assent to a system which he did not understand.

Upon the connexion of faith with baptism, Antipædobaptists found what they consider as an unanswerable argument against the baptism of infants. If it is required that he who is baptized should believe, it follows that children ought not to be baptized, because they are not capable of faith. The argument has a specious appearance, which imposes on superficial thinkers; but when it is thoroughly canvassed, it will be found, I trust, to be destitute of force. When our Lord says, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved," he no doubt teaches that baptism should be administered to a believer; but if we infer that none but a believer should be baptized, let us observe the consequence which will follow from his words. Faith is made as necessary to salvation as to baptism; and it is as fairly deducible from his words that none can be saved, as that none should be baptized but believers. Thus, children are excluded from heaven, as well as from this initiatory rite. This, however, our adversaries will not allow. They admit, as well as we, that many children are saved; and, consequently, admit that what is required from adults in order to their eternal happiness, is not required from infants. If they will be consistent, they must further admit that this text speaks of adults alone; and, consequently, that the argument drawn from it against the baptism of infants is a sophism, more being contained in the conclusion than in the premises. It evidently speaks of adults, for it supposes them to be capable of faith. But because faith is made necessary to their baptism, it is not made necessary to the baptism of infants, any more than it is necessary to the salvation of infants, because it is necessary to the salvation of adults. And with respect to infants, since, according to our antagonists, the thing signified is granted to them, it will not be easy to assign a good reason why the sign should be denied.

Infants were proper subjects of circumcision. Circumcision implied an obligation to observe the ordinances and commandments of God; and hence the circumcised person is pronounced to be "a debtor to do the whole law."\* If, under the ancient economy, there had been some persons of similar views to those of Antipædobaptists, they might have brought forward as specious reasoning against the circumcision, as is now produced against the baptism, of children. They might have said, 'Children have not yet attained the use of reason, and are therefore disqualified for coming under a moral obligation. How can they be bound to obey a law which they do not understand? They know not what is going on when circumcision is administered to them; and, with respect to them, it is mere mockery, a rite without a meaning. Let it be reserved for grown up persons, to whom its design can be explained, and who can rationally and voluntarily accede to the covenant of which it is a seal.' Yet the male children of the Israelites were circumcised on the eighth day after their birth; and why then may not the children of Christians be dedicated at as early a period to the service of God? The objection might have been strengthened by the remark which an Apostle has made, that, in the case of Abraham, in whom circumcision commenced, it was "a seal of the righteousness of faith."† Here it might have been said, faith preceded circumcision. It not only preceded, but was pre-supposed as the indispensable qualification of the person to be circumcised; and as this took place in the case of Abraham, the father of the Jews, it was certainly intended to signify that the rite should not be performed upon any of his posterity, unless they possessed the same qualification. This is exactly the argument of our antagonists against the baptism of children; but we see at once how little it avails. The children of Christian parents may as well be baptized, as the children of Jewish parents were circumcised, without faith.

\* Gal. v. 3.

† Rom. iv. 11.



Had it been the will of God that the religion of Moses should become universal, the persons sent forth to promulgate it would have received a commission similar to that of the Apostles, and would have been commanded, first to teach all nations, and then to circumcise them. If any person had inferred, from the terms of their commission, that none should be circumcised without being previously taught, we know that the conclusion would have been wrong, because there was a previous command to administer this rite to children; and hence we perceive the fallacy of inferring from the Apostolical commission, that believers only should be baptized. It may be said that the two cases are different, because there is an express law for the circumcision of children, but no precept for their baptism. We answer, that, as there is a precept for circumcising them, and admitting them into the church, it appears that their age is no obstacle to the participation of the seal of the covenant; and that, as this privilege was once conceded to children, we presume that it is continued to them, and demand, not assertion, but proof, that it is revoked. In this case, the *onus probandi* lies upon our antagonists.

It is in vain to tell us that "circumcision was a sign of carnal descent, a mark of national distinction, and a token of interest in those temporal blessings that were promised to Abraham." All this may be true; but it is also true that it was a sign of spiritual blessings, a seal of the righteousness of faith, and was therefore precisely of the same import with Christian baptism. The passages of Scripture which speak of "circumcising the foreskin of the heart," of "circumcising the heart to love the Lord," and of the regenerated "as the true circumcision," demonstrate that it was a seal of the covenant of grace; and consequently, that the new seal, which has displaced it but bears the same signification, may, with equal propriety, be administered to infants. It is the interest of Antipædobaptists to show that baptism has not come in the room of circumcision; but, however necessary it may be to their scheme, they cannot proceed in the attempt without setting aside the express declaration of Scripture. Attend to the following words of the Apostle: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God."\* The subject of discourse is regeneration, or the putting off of the body of sins; and of this change, it is intimated circumcision was formerly a sign. The blessing is continued under the new dispensation; but is it now without a sign? Is there no representation of it to our senses under the Gospel? Yes; it is still adumbrated by a new ordinance, and we are circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, when we are buried with him in baptism. The mention of baptism in the same sentence with circumcision as equivalent to it, and as significant of the same spiritual change in the state of the soul, cannot fail to suggest to any person, who is not prejudiced, that the one is the substitute of the other. Circumcision has ceased; but there is another initiatory rite given for the same purpose, which ought, therefore, to be administered to the same persons for whom circumcision was designed.

There was no occasion to specify children in the commission given to the Apostles; because they and all the Jews would understand that, since baptism had come in the room of circumcision, their children had the same right to it as themselves. Both having been comprehended in the covenant made with Abraham, they would naturally conclude that the new covenant or dispensation was of equal extent. If a change had been made to the exclusion of infants, it would have excited surprise, and given rise to inquiries, and called forth explanations on the part of the Apostles, to satisfy the new converts, that they might acquiesce in this unexpected limitation of their privileges. We cannot

\* Col. ii. 11, 12.

suppose that an alteration so important, and so deeply affecting the interest of their families, would have passed in silence. Yet we do not find a single hint, that the ordinance which had come in the room of circumcision was to be administered to adults alone, and that their children must wait till they were capable of making a profession of faith. The language in which the Jews were addressed on the day of Pentecost, instead of suggesting a repeal of the law, seems rather to import that it was to continue in force: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."\* In what other light could the audience understand these words, than that the promise of salvation through Christ was made, not to those alone who believed, but to their seed: that their families were to be admitted to the privileges of the new dispensation as well as themselves; and that baptism was to both a sign and seal of their interest in the covenant. They would naturally and unavoidably judge this to be the meaning of the declaration, especially as it was expressed in the same terms which had been used at the institution of circumcision: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." "This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee: Every man-child among you shall be circumcised."† God made a covenant with Abraham and his seed, and the promise is to believers of every nation, and their children. There is no difference in these two cases; *seed* and *children* have the same signification; and the plain inference is, that the children of Christians are to be baptized, as the children of Jews were circumcised.

Our Lord said on a certain occasion, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."‡ The kingdom of heaven frequently signifies the new dispensation, or the church upon earth; and if this is the meaning here, children are pronounced to belong to it, and have an undoubted right to the sign of admission. If, however, as some contend, it is the state of glory, the inference is still good, that being heirs of eternal life they ought not to be denied the ordinance which is the seal of their title to it. It is more probable, that "the kingdom of heaven" is in this passage the church, and our Lord assigns as the reason why children should be suffered to come to him, that he recognized them as members of it. It is a pitiful evasion to say that *τοιοῦτων*, *such*, signifies not *children*, but *persons of child-like dispositions*. It makes our Lord reason inconclusively; for how could it be a reason that parents should bring their children to him to be blessed, that persons resembling children in humility and teachableness, are members of his church? If this interpretation of the passage did not favour their own hypothesis, Antipædobaptists themselves would exclaim against it as forced and unnatural.

Passing other arguments from Scripture in favour of infant baptism, I shall conclude by calling your attention to the fact, that in the Apostolic age, not only believers themselves were baptized, but their households. Lydia was baptized, "and her household." The jailor of Philippi was baptized, "and all his;"§ and Paul baptized "the household of Stephanas."|| These are only a sample of the hundreds and thousands of families, to whom this rite was administered upon the faith of their parents. A household comprehends all the individuals living together under the same roof, and subject to the same domestic government; and certainly children are not excluded. This would be an arbitrary and most unwarrantable limitation of the term. When it is used on any other

\* Acts ii. 38, 39. † Gen. xvii. 7, 10. ‡ Matth. xix. 14. § Acts xvi. 15, 33. || 1 Cor. i. 16.



occasion, it always suggests the idea not only of servants but of children, and, in the first place, of the latter; and it would suggest this idea to all the readers of the New Testament, if their minds were free from prejudice, and had nothing in view but to discover the truth. Were we told now that a certain man had been baptized, and his family, there is not one of us who would not immediately think of his children, and conclude that they had all been washed with water in the name of the Trinity. It may be objected to this view, that we have no certainty that there were children in the families mentioned; but this is a miserable subterfuge. What was done in the cases specified, was done in many other instances; for they are recorded as a specimen of the mode of procedure, and it would be truly wonderful, if among all the converts in the primitive times, there was not one who had children; so wonderful indeed that no man in his sober senses could believe it. As the existence of children in families is so common that the exceptions are rare, we are authorized to conclude, that they were often found in the houses of the early disciples; and the argument from the baptism of households is obviously on our side. We have satisfactory evidence that the Apostles baptized infants; and unless they were considered as belonging to the church, and proper subjects of this seal of their admission into it, we can affix no meaning to these words of Paul, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."\* The holiness of children which they derive from the faith of their parents, can signify nothing but their separation from the world, and their dedication to the service of Christ, of which their baptism is a sign.

It appears now that we have a better warrant for the baptism of children than human authority; that it is not a corruption of a divine institution; and that they who confine it to adults are chargeable with wresting from believing parents and their offspring, a privilege which God has granted to the spiritual, as well as to the natural posterity of Abraham.

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## LECTURE LXXXIX.

### ON THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

**Baptism Administered in Name of the Trinity.—Meaning and Import of the Words Used.**

—Who may Baptize.—Lay Baptism; Baptism by Heretics.—Place of Baptism.—Sponsors.—The Blessings of Regeneration; Pardon, Adoption, and Resurrection to Life, Signified by Baptism.—Duties of the Baptized.

THE symbol in baptism is water, which is applied to the body by aspersion or affusion, and has been chosen, as will afterwards appear, as an expressive sign of internal purification. I proceed to state that the ordinance is to be administered in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. At our reception into the communion of the church, there is a solemn recognition of the blessed Trinity, and a distinct mention of the three persons of the Godhead, as one in essence and equal in power and authority. The order in which they are enumerated, corresponds to the order of subsistence, which we do not understand, but according to which the Father is the first, the Son begotten of the Father is the second, and the Spirit proceeding from both is the third. This is not the proper place for demonstrating the divinity of the

\* 1 Cor. vii. 14.

second and the third persons of the Trinity, but we cannot pass on without remarking, that one proof is furnished by baptism. They are associated with the first person in the same religious ordinance. We are called to look up to them all with equal reverence, to expect the blessings signified and sealed from them all, and to consider ourselves as brought under obligations to give to them all the same homage and obedience. Can it be believed, that, as some affirm, the Son is only a man like ourselves, and the Holy Ghost is an angel or merely a name for a divine operation upon the mind? Has our Lord commanded us to be baptized in the name of God, of a creature, and of a manifestation of divine power?

It may be deemed questionable, whether the express mention of all the persons of the Trinity is essential to baptism; because in the Acts, when Paul baptized some of the disciples of John, he is said to have baptized them "in the name of the Lord Jesus."\* It may, however, be supposed that the historian gives only an abbreviated form; and it is probable, that the Apostles would adhere to the terms of their original commission. There was no reason why they should deviate from it; and we take the course which becomes us, when we literally follow the instructions of Him who gave this ordinance to his church.

The expression in the original is not *εν τῷ ὀνόματι*, but *εις το ὄνομα*. It has been remarked, that these two forms of expression are of different import; that the former denotes the impulsive cause of an action, and the latter the object, or final cause of it. Whether *εν*, and *εις* should be thus distinguished, when they are joined with the noun *ὄνομα*, I will not pretend to determine; but it is certain that the one preposition is sometimes used for the other, or that *εις* is used when *εν* would have expressed the meaning equally well. If we adopt the common translation of the phrase, it will signify that we are baptized by the authority of the persons of the Trinity. It is worthy of attention, that when *ὄνομα* occurs in connexion with baptism, the expression commonly is *εις το ὄνομα*; and the words of the Apostolic commission may be rendered, "baptizing them to the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The meaning may be collected by a reference to the words of Paul to the Corinthians: "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized to the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius, lest any of you should say, that I baptized to my own name."† These questions were suggested by the schism among the Corinthians, of whom some said, "I am of Paul, and others, I am of Apollos;" and to convince them of the folly and sinfulness of their conduct, the Apostle reminds them that they were not baptized to his name, initiated by that ordinance into the faith and profession of his religion, but into the service of Christ, who alone should for this reason be acknowledged as their Master. There is, however, one instance of a different form of expression, which may give rise to a suspicion that *εις το ὄνομα* and *εν τῷ ὀνόματι* are equivalent, and that the alleged distinction between them is rather fanciful than real. When the Holy Ghost had fallen upon Cornelius and his company, Peter "commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord,"‡ *εν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ Κυρίου*. It is possible, however, that there was a design in using both expressions, and that they were intended to convey different ideas; *εν τῷ ὀνόματι* denoting the authority from which the ordinance has proceeded, and *εις το ὄνομα*, the object to whom we are dedicated in it.

The administration of baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, signifies that we are baptized by the authority of the persons of the Holy Trinity. They all concurred in giving this institution to the church, as they all co-operated in our salvation, of which it is a sign. It is a memorial of the love of the Father, in sending his Son to be the

\* Acts xix. 5.

† 1 Cor. i. 13—15.

‡ Acts x. 48.



Saviour of the world, of the love of the Son in assuming our nature and dying for our sins, and of the love of the Spirit in coming forth to purify our souls. The united wisdom, and power, and grace of the subsistences in the Divine essence, were displayed in the redemption of fallen man, and our admission to the new covenant is their conjunct act.

Again, the administration of baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, signifies that we are baptized into the faith and profession of the Holy Trinity. We are baptized to their name. This mysterious doctrine of our religion, that there are three Persons in one undivided essence, equal in power and glory, is explicitly and solemnly recognised; and it follows, that whoever afterwards denies this fundamental truth under whatever pretext, whoever ascribes divinity to the Father alone, and pronounces the Son and the Spirit to be inferior to him, renounces the faith which he was bound by the most sacred engagements to maintain. But a simple acknowledgment of the Trinity does not fulfil the design of our baptism. We are required to regard the persons of the Godhead with devout affections, corresponding to the manifestations of them in redemption; to look up with reverence and love to the Father as our Father; to feel our obligations to the Son, and depend upon him alone for pardon and eternal life; and to expect from the Holy Ghost those gracious operations and aids, by which we shall be sanctified and prepared for heaven, and those consolations which will be a source of peace and transcendent happiness, amidst the difficulties and distresses of life.

In a word, the administration of baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; imports that we are dedicated to the service of those Divine persons; that we are engaged to offer religious worship to them, as separately and conjunctly the proper objects of it, and to yield unreserved and unintermitted obedience to their law, as revealed in the Scriptures. Baptism, which is denominated a seal of the covenant, ought to be viewed in the light of a federal transaction. On the one hand the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, promise to bestow upon the baptized the blessings of salvation, of which water is a symbol; and on the other hand, they come under an engagement "to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded us."

Before I proceed to speak of the blessings which are signified and sealed by baptism, it may be proper to inquire to whom it belongs by right to administer this ordinance. The catechism of the Council of Trent, having stated that bishops and priests have a right to baptize, and that deacons may baptize with their consent, goes on to say, "that the lowest rank is of those, who on an urgent necessity may baptize, but without the use of the solemn ceremonies. Of this sort are all persons, yea even of the lay-people, whether men or women, what sect soever they profess; for this power is permitted even to Jews, infidels, and heretics, when necessity compels, provided that in doing so they intend to do what the catholic church does in that kind of administration."\* In particular this office is assigned to midwives, "who are allowed to baptize in the presence of a man who is unskilful in the performance of this sacrament, although such liberty is not granted to other females."† This is what is called obstetrical baptism, from the Latin word *obstetrix*, which signifies a midwife. In the ancient church lay-baptism was held valid although irregular; but the baptism of women, and of Jews and infidels, was rejected.

The admission of persons not invested with the sacred office to baptize, originated in the notion of the absolute necessity of this rite to salvation. Hence, the above catechism says, "We may admire the exceeding wisdom and goodness of our Lord in admitting these to baptize; for, seeing this sacrament must necessarily be received of all, as he appointed water to be the matter of it, than which nothing can be more common, so also would he have no one ex

\* Cat. Concil. Trid. Pars ii. de Sacram. §. 22.

† Ib. §. 24.

excluded from the administration of it, although it be not lawful for all to use the solemn ceremonies; not as though the rights and ceremonies are of more dignity, but that they are of less necessity than the sacrament.”\* This inducement to such a disorderly practice, does not exist among us, who believe, that although baptism being a Divine institution, no adult person could safely neglect it; yet it is not so connected with salvation, that unbaptized children are excluded from the kingdom of heaven. We cannot persuade ourselves that the salvation of infants is so much in the power of their parents, that they can deprive them of eternal life by their carelessness or deliberate wickedness. Baptism is only a sign of the communication of spiritual blessings; and we entertain no doubt, that as the sign is not always accompanied with the thing signified, so the thing signified is often enjoyed without the sign. We do not, with Papists and too many Protestants, and particularly with some half-popish Divines of the Church of England, hold the strange and unscriptural opinion, which is too much countenanced by the language of their liturgy, that baptism is regeneration. In the office of baptism, the priest prays that God would give “his Holy Spirit to this infant, that he may be born again;” and after baptism says, “Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ’s church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits.” “We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy church.” We maintain that, as many of the Jews were uncircumcised in heart, so many children of Christians are unbaptized in heart; and we see melancholy and irresistible proof of the fact in their subsequent conduct. We are convinced, that there is a baptism of the Spirit distinct from the baptism of water; that the former does not always accompany the latter; and that God gives the Spirit to whom he pleases, without limiting the gift to the use of the sign. “Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance,” says our Confession of Faith, “yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.”†

If it were once admitted, that baptism is not absolutely necessary to salvation, the practice of allowing laymen, women, Jews, and infidels, to baptize, would be given up without reluctance. In this, as in many other cases, one error has led to another. But we object to the practice on another ground, namely, that it is an invasion of the right of the ministers of religion, to whom alone it belongs to conduct the worship of the church, and dispense the ordinances. They only have authority to administer baptism, who have received a commission from Christ to preach the Gospel. These two parts of the office are joined together, and should be exercised by the same persons: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them.” Such were the words of Christ to the Apostles; and he addressed them as the first in a long succession of individuals, who, although not endowed with miraculous powers, were to be employed in performing the ordinary functions of religion. The work of the ministry in all its departments, is committed to pastors and teachers, by whom it has been carried on since Apostles, and Prophets, and Evangelists ceased. There seems to be no reason, except the unscriptural idea that baptism regenerates *ex opere operato*, and is consequently of absolute necessity to salvation,—there seems to be no reason why laymen should be permitted to baptize, and not be permitted also to celebrate the Eucharist; a liberty which, so far as I know, no church ever conceded to them. Lay-baptism ought to be held invalid; and, were a case of this kind to occur, the person should be baptized again by a lawful minister of Christ.

\* Cat. Concil. Trid. Pars ii. de Sacram. §. 23.

† Conf. xxviii. §. 5.



There is a more intricate question respecting baptism by heretics, which gave rise to a keen controversy in the primitive church. Doubts of its validity had been for some time entertained; but, in the third century, the Christians in Asia came to a decision, in more than one Council, that all heretics should be re-baptized before their admission into the communion of the Catholic Church. Stephen, who was then bishop of Rome, was filled with indignation, and proceeded to ex-communicate the Asiatics; but their cause was espoused by Cyprian and the other bishops of Africa, who, in defiance of the threatenings of Stephen, pronounced baptism administered by heretics to be void of all efficacy and validity. It was finally determined by the Council of Nice, that those who had been baptized by heretics, should be received into the church simply by the imposition of hands; with the exception of the followers of Paul of Samosata, whom the Council commanded to be re-baptized, because his sect did not acknowledge the Trinity. Those who maintained the invalidity of the baptism of heretics, comprehended under this denomination all the sects which had separated from the great body of Christians; for the character was applied in those times with great latitude, and was sometimes given to worthy persons, who opposed prevailing errors and superstitions. The decree of the Council gave a sanction to the baptism of all the different societies of professed Christians, and excepted those alone by whom the ordinance was essentially corrupted. Some are said to have baptized "in the name of the uncreated God, and in the name of the created Son, and in the name of the sanctifying Spirit, who was created by the created Son; others, "in the name of the Father the only true God, of Jesus Christ the Saviour and a creature, and of the Holy Ghost the servant of both;" and others, "in the name of the Father, by the Son, and in the Holy Ghost."

It is evident that baptism administered in such forms, is not Christian baptism. It is essentially defective, because it sets aside the doctrine of the Trinity, into the profession of which our Lord commanded his disciples to be baptized. There is, however, considerable difficulty in settling the general question respecting the validity of baptism. Where the form is exactly observed, may it not be vitiated by the administrator, although he bear the character of a minister of Christ? Is every man to be recognized as a minister of Christ, having authority to officiate in his name, who is called such? the man who errs in the fundamental doctrines of religion, the man who holds the Trinity, but is guilty of idolatry, and is tainted with all the pollutions of the Romish Church? It seems to be generally agreed not to scrutinize this matter too minutely, and to admit baptism administered by any person who holds the office of the ministry in the church to which he belongs, and who observes the form prescribed by our Saviour, although it may be encumbered with superstitious rites.

With respect to the place of baptism, it may be observed, that as soon as the Christians had churches, it was administered in them, before the congregation of the faithful, and the practice of baptizing in private houses was condemned. The law, however, was remitted in favour of the sick and infirm, and might be dispensed with by the authority of the bishop. Our Church retains this law; and private baptism is one of the five articles of Perth, which were abjured by our fathers at the renovation of the National Covenant. The Scripture gives no direction relative to this matter; but it is more consonant to the design of the ordinance, which is a recognition of the baptized as members of the church, that it should be publicly celebrated. It has been alleged, as an argument for the public administration of baptism, that it should be preceded by the preaching of the word; and an appeal is made to the commission of the Apostles, "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them." I would advise you, for the credit of your understandings, never to make use of this argument.

The word translated to *teach*, signifies, *to make disciples*. As men can be made disciples of Christ only by teaching, it is certainly implied that they should be taught before they are baptized; but the sense of the passage is totally misapprehended, when it is understood to mean that baptism must be accompanied with the preaching of a sermon. Christ commands his Apostles to instruct men, before they receive them into his Church; and some sage commentators conclude that we must preach to adults when we baptize children! This is undoubtedly admirable reasoning.

There is no fixed time for the administration of baptism. In ancient times, some maintained, that as children were circumcised, so they should be baptized, on the eighth day after their birth. It was proposed by others, that it should be deferred for three years; and many put it off to old age, and to their last illness, from an idea that they should obtain at once the forgiveness of all their sins. It became the common practice to baptize at Easter all who had been born since the last return of that festival, except in cases of necessity, when baptism was performed at any season of the year. I shall only observe, that as, on the one hand, indecent haste should be avoided, which would seem to imply a belief that baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation; so, on the other hand, parents should beware of unnecessary delay, and should embrace an early opportunity of dedicating their offspring to God.

The persons by whom children should be presented in baptism, are their parents, and not sponsors, who in the ancient church were called *avadoxoi*, *susceptores*, and are known in the Church of England by the names of godfathers and godmothers. It is in the right of their parents that children are baptized; parents are their natural guardians, and upon them the law of God imposes the duty of bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Sponsors are unknown to the Scriptures, and the part which they perform is truly ridiculous. Nothing can be more inconsistent with common sense, than to make them answer in the name of the speechless child. "Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works?" "I renounce them all." "Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his only-begotten Son?" "All this I steadfastly believe." "Wilt thou then obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life?" "I will."

I now proceed to inquire into the import of baptism, or what blessings it signifies and seals.

The first blessing signified by baptism, as it is the first blessing promised in the new covenant, is regeneration. I call your attention to the following passage in the Epistle to Titus:—"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."\* Here mention is made of the thing signified by baptism, and in such a manner as manifestly to allude to the ordinance itself. Not only is the Holy Ghost said to be "shed upon us," in reference to the description of his influences by the metaphor of water, but we are farther said to be saved by the "washing of regeneration." The original term, *λουτρον* signifies a *bath* and the *water contained in it*, and must be understood to refer to baptism, the only washing with water which is known in the Christian church; and the expression, the washing of regeneration, conjoined with the "renewing of the Holy Ghost," obviously teaches what baptism imports, namely, the purification of the soul from sin. I quote also the words of our Lord to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God."† The

\* Tit. iii. 4—6.

† John iii. 5.



change which is declared to be necessary to qualify us for admission into the spiritual and heavenly kingdom of God, is called a second birth. The expression was not understood by Nicodemus, and still excites the surprise, and even the ridicule of some who profess to be like him, masters in Israel; but its meaning is easily apprehended by those who have studied the Scriptures with attention and humility. It signifies a moral change effected in the soul by the Spirit of God, who infuses into it a principle of divine life, rectifies the disorder of its faculties, and enables it to fulfil the purpose of its being by glorifying its Maker. It seems to be designated a new birth, to intimate that the subject of the change enters upon a new mode of existence, is introduced as it were into a new world, becomes a part of the new creation: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."\* The agent is the Holy Ghost; but our Lord speaks "of water," as well as "of the Spirit." It is the opinion of some, that the same thing is expressed by different terms, agreeably to a phraseology not unfrequent in the scriptural style; but it is more probable that water is mentioned because it is the emblem of the influences of the Spirit. It has been objected, that there cannot be an allusion to baptism, because the institution of it was posterior to the interview with Nicodemus. But this is a mistake, originating in the supposition that it took its rise from the commission given to the Apostles after the resurrection, while it is to be dated from the commencement of our Saviour's ministry, and only received a new enactment prior to his ascension. To the conversation with Nicodemus, this remark is subjoined by the Evangelist: "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized."† From the passages now cited, it appears that baptism is significant of the regenerating influences of the Spirit.

A second blessing signified by baptism, is the forgiveness of sin. Peter said to the Jews, who were awakened by his sermon on the day of Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;"‡ and when Ananias was sent to Paul, after he had met the Lord in the way, he addressed him in the following words: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins."§ It is not to be inferred from these passages, that remission is inseparably connected with baptism any more than regeneration, so that every person to whom it is administered, is immediately delivered from a state of condemnation. The idea is unscriptural, and is adopted only by those who are grossly ignorant of the economy of grace, in which God reserves to himself a right to give or withhold spiritual blessings according to his pleasure. But we are plainly taught, that it is a sign of remission, or that the application of water to the body, is a symbol of the purification of the soul from guilt, by the atoning blood of Christ. It holds out in figure, the means by which children are delivered from original sin, and adults from both original and actual. In the ark, "a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water; the like figure whereunto," says Peter, "even baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."§ It is the symbol of salvation; and those to whom the blessing signified by it is imparted, shall as certainly escape the avenging wrath of God, as Noah and his family escaped the destruction of the flood.

A third blessing signified by baptism, is admission into the family of God; for it represents our fellowship with Christ, through whom we become his children. It is the sign of our reception into the church, the part of the family which is upon earth; the other part, consisting of the spirits of just men made

\* 2 Cor. v. 17.

¶ Acts xxii. 16.

† John iii. 22.

§ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

‡ Acts ii. 38.

perfect, being in heaven. The visible church, comprehending a great proportion of ignorant and worldly-minded men, cannot be considered as entitled to this high character; but, according to the constitution of its Founder, the true church is an assembly of persons who know and obey the truth, and in baptism we are enrolled among them. The voice of God says from heaven, "I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." As an Israelitish male child was recognized by circumcision to be a descendant of Abraham, and one of the chosen people, so we are declared by baptism to be disciples of Christ, and members of the household of God: "By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."\* As the baptism of water is the external sign of the baptism of the Spirit, it must represent what this internal baptism effects; and the Apostle teaches us, that by partaking of the Spirit, we are incorporated with the people of God of all nations and conditions. Baptism is therefore a recognition of our right to the privileges of adoption, which unquestionably belong to the members of his family, and, in particular, of our right to the external privileges of the church. In these, Jews, Mahometans, and Heathens, have no interest. They are strangers and foreigners; but the baptized are fellow citizens with the saints. They are placed under the care of the ministers and rulers of the church, should be regarded by the members as brethren, and have an interest in their love and their prayers; they are admitted to the benefit of public and private instruction; they may claim, if adults, a place at the table of the Lord; and if children, are entitled to this other seal of the covenant as soon as they show themselves qualified for it by their attainments in knowledge, and the general propriety of their conduct. It has been objected against the administration of baptism to infants, that it can be of no advantage to them, because they are incapable of understanding, or even perceiving the transaction. But, besides that it may be productive of the most beneficial effects at a future period, when they come to know its meaning, and reflect upon its solemn obligations; it is of no small moment that it introduces them into the society of the people of God. If the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, we ought to set some value upon the prayers which are offered up by ministers and people for the young, who are to succeed them in the profession of the truth. If a religious education is of unspeakable benefit, it is one of the happy fruits of their baptism, in which their parents engaged to instil into their minds the principles of piety and morality. If the company of good men, their counsels, their admonitions, their example, are calculated to be useful, they enjoy these in consequence of their adoption into an association separated from the world lying in wickedness.

The last blessing signified by baptism, is a resurrection to eternal life. Some have supposed that there is a symbolical representation of this event in the rising of the baptized person from the water; but as it has appeared that this is not the scriptural mode of administering the ordinance, we may pronounce this idea to be altogether fanciful. Paul refers to a connexion between baptism and the resurrection of Christ, when, having said that we are buried with him by baptism into death, he adds, "If we have been planted in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."† He is speaking of our death to sin, and our life to righteousness, or of the spiritual change in the present state, of which baptism is a sign; but if it is expressive of one great effect of the resurrection of Christ, it may be very naturally considered as a pledge of all its blessed fruits, and, in particular, of a glorious immortality. The same Apostle says to the Colossians, "Ye are buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation

\* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

† Rom. vi. 5.



of God, who hath raised him from the dead,"\* still signifying, that baptism imports our interest in the resurrection of Christ, and its consequences. It was called by the ancients, the earnest of good things to come, and the type of the future resurrection. May not this be the meaning of that passage in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, concerning which there has been such a diversity of opinion? "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not? why are they then baptized for the dead?"† Some of the Fathers understood the expression *ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν*, to mean to be baptized *into the hope of the resurrection of the dead*; or, what amounts to the same thing, to submit to baptism that they might fill up the places of those who had died, thus declaring their belief that they had not perished, but were alive in a better world, and their hope that, through Jesus Christ, to whom they dedicated themselves in baptism, they also should be raised again to enjoy the same glorious recompense. According to this view of the passage, a resurrection to life is one of the blessings signified and sealed by this institution. It assures us of a triumph over death and the grave, through the redeeming blood of Christ, with which we are sprinkled; and of admission into heaven, for which we are qualified by the washing of regeneration. It is the seal of God impressed upon the members of his family, to distinguish them from the heirs of perdition. Like the blood of the paschal lamb on the houses of the Israelites, it is a pledge of the safety of believers on that awful day, when sinners shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt, and, were it possible, would hide themselves again in the grave from the wrath of the Judge.

Let us inquire what are the obligations of baptism, or what are the duties incumbent upon those to whom it has been administered.

We have already remarked, that it is a federal rite, in which God promises to bestow upon men the blessings of the covenant of grace, and they come under an engagement to obey the law of the covenant. When an Israelite was circumcised, he was bound to keep the whole law, "for circumcision," says Paul, "verily profiteth if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision."‡ Baptism is of the same import, and ratifies our subjection to the authority of Christ, whose disciples we profess to be, and into the communion of whose church we are admitted. The commission to baptize all nations was connected with an injunction "to teach them to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them." To this federal transaction Peter alludes, when he says, that "baptism doth now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the *answer of a good conscience* toward God,"—*συνειδησεως αγαθης ελερωτηρια*.§ *Ελερωτηρια* signifies an *interrogation*, and likewise an *answer to an interrogation*, and refers in the present case to the questions proposed to the candidates for baptism, of which we have a specimen in the words of Philip to the eunuch of Ethiopia, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." When an adult person could answer this question and others of a similar nature with a good conscience, baptism was to him an assurance of salvation. He had entered with an upright heart into the service of Christ, and should certainly receive the promised recompense.

First, Baptism implies an engagement to believe all the truths which Christ has revealed. It imports, as we have seen, a profession of our faith in the Trinity, a doctrine which, when, viewed in its connexions and consequences, is found to involve all the other doctrines of Christianity. Being recognized as the disciples of Jesus, we publicly own him as our teacher, and place ourselves under his care, to receive his instructions without murmuring or disputing. Full confidence must be placed in his wisdom as infallible, and

\* Col. ii. 12.

† 1 Cor. xv. 29.

‡ Rom. ii. 25.

§ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

obedience must be yielded to his authority without hesitation. The baptized ought to believe without demanding any other evidence but his testimony; to embrace every doctrine which he delivers, although its truth be not manifest to reason, nor deducible from its principles. The man who makes his own understanding the measure of his creed, who admits into it only what he deems plain and perspicuous articles, and rejects such as are mysterious, disregards the command which came from the excellent glory, and retracts the submission which he pledged in his baptism. In the early ages of the church, when converts from Judaism and Heathenism sought admission into it, the candidates for baptism were previously instructed in the principles of the Christian religion; and were required to make a public profession of their faith. Certain questions were proposed, to which satisfactory answers were expected. The formulary was different in different places; but the subject was the same, and is contained in the creed, which goes under the name of the Apostles, although it was not composed by them. It is a summary of what was considered to be the doctrine of the Apostles, and of the faith which the members of the church were bound to profess and maintain.

Secondly, Baptism implies an engagement to observe the ordinances of Christ. When we enter into a new society, we pledge ourselves to conform to its laws and usages. When a Heathen was baptized, he renounced polytheism and idolatry, and bound himself henceforth to worship the living and true God, through his Son the only Mediator. When a Jew was baptized, he renounced the altar, the priesthood, and the obligations of the law, that he might offer spiritual sacrifices, in the name and through the intercession of the High Priest of our profession. As Christ is the Supreme Lord of the church, it belongs to him only to appoint religious ordinances; and consequently, the engagement of which we are speaking, extends no farther than his will as expressed in the Scriptures; it imposes no obligation upon us to observe any of the inventions of men in religion. Baptism does not introduce us into the particular society of Christians by whose ministers it is dispensed, but into the Catholic church; and the duties arising from it are exclusively those which are incumbent upon all the followers of Christ, without any reference to the peculiarities of a party. We are not baptized into the observance of the rites and ceremonies, or into the belief of the erroneous dogmas of the church in which we happen to be born. Baptism is our dedication to Christ; and its design is fulfilled, when, adhering closely to his institutions, we worship the Father in Spirit and in truth.

Lastly, Baptism implies an engagement to obey the commandments of Christ. In the primitive church the candidate was solemnly asked, "Dost thou renounce the devil, and his pomp and his service, and dost thou join thyself to Christ?" and upon his returning an affirmative answer to these questions, baptism was administered to him. After having reminded Christians of their baptism, as expressive of communion with Christ in his death and resurrection, Paul addresses the following exhortations to them: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof: neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."\* As the ear of the Hebrew servant who loved his master was bored, to denote that he was to remain in his house during life, so, by the command of Christ, water is sprinkled or poured upon us, to signify that we are dedicated to his service for ever.

Baptism, like circumcision, is administered but once; not, as Papists main-

\* Rom. vi. 11—13.



tain, because it impresses an indelible character upon the soul, or a mystical quality by which the baptized are fitted for the service of God, conformed to Christ, and distinguished from others; but because regeneration, of which it is significant, is not repeated, and the obligations under which it places us can never be disannulled.

Although children are insensible of the transaction, and can therefore at the time derive no moral benefit from it, yet reflection upon it at a subsequent period may be productive of the happiest effects. To a mind seriously disposed, it must be an affecting consideration, that almost as soon as we entered upon life, we were received into the church of the living God, placed under the dispensation of grace, and consecrated to our Creator and Redeemer. The situation is evidently calculated to awaken sentiments of gratitude, and to call forth our most fervent wishes and diligent endeavours, that the merciful intention of Heaven with respect to us may be accomplished. If a young person attend to the circumstances in which he is placed, he will feel that he is not at liberty to choose his own manner of life, to dispose of himself according to his own pleasure; but is under engagements which it will be his interest to fulfil, and which he cannot violate without great guilt and inexpressible danger.

The baptism of children is calculated to produce the best effects upon parents. It places their children in a new relation to them, and presents them under a new aspect. Parents are now their spiritual guardians, appointed to superintend their eternal as well as their temporal interests. Their children are a sacred deposit, and are not so much theirs as the Lord's, for whose service it is their chief business to prepare them. Their own concern in the solemn transaction, is a powerful appeal to their consciences, and calls for their active endeavours to accomplish the design with which they presented them to be baptized. Some disapprove of exacting any vow or promise from parents, and administer the ordinance with a simple declaration of their duty. It is not a matter of much moment whether they come under a verbal engagement or not, because the law of God previously binds them, and their appearance is a recognition of their obligations. In the act of giving their children to the Lord, they virtually promise to educate them for his service, and to make their souls, still more than their bodies, the objects of solicitude.

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## LECTURE XC.

ON THE

### SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

*Institution and Primitive Simplicity of the Rite.—Its Gradual Corruption.—Transubstantiation.—Meaning of the Words of Institution.—Its Contrariety to the Language of Scripture, to Reason, and to Common Sense.—Pascal's Defence of it Examined.*

OUR Lord, having eaten the passover with his disciples the evening on which he was betrayed, instituted the sacred supper, to be a memorial of his sufferings, a sign of his presence with the church, and a seal of the new covenant which he was to confirm the next day with his blood. An account of it is given by the Evangelists; but that which I shall lay before you, as the most

distinct and complete, is found in one of the Epistles of Paul, to whom it had been communicated by our Saviour himself. "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night on which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."\*

It is evident from the words of institution, that it was intended to be a perpetual ordinance. Accordingly we learn from the Scriptures that it was observed in the Apostolical church; and we know that from those days down to the present time, it has been celebrated by his professed disciples without interruption. In the primitive church, the original institution was retained in its simplicity, as we see from the second apology of Justin Martyr, who wrote early in the second century. No ceremonies were added to render it more sacred and venerable in the eyes of the people; no false notions were entertained of its design; no mystery was supposed to be concealed under the symbols and the prescribed actions; the words of Christ were understood according to the meaning which common sense would put upon them, and the ordinance was regarded as a memorial of his passion, and a means of strengthening the faith and increasing the love of his followers. That Father, indeed, informs us, that they did not receive the bread *ὡς κοινον αὐτον* and the cup, *ὡς κοινον πομα*, "as common bread and wine;" but it is plain that he did not consider them as sacred in consequence of any change which they had undergone in their nature, but solely on account of the purpose to which they were applied, and their sacramental relation to our Saviour. That he looked upon them, although not common, as still bread and wine, appears from his calling them expressly "nourishment," by which our flesh and blood are nourished through their conversion into our substance.

In this light the elements were received for several ages after the days of Justin Martyr, as is manifest from many passages which have been quoted from the Fathers, and which show, that they considered them as still bread and wine, and as having acquired the names of the body and blood of the Lord only in consequence of his appointment, and their sanctification by the offices of the ministers of religion. In process of time highly figurative language began to be used, which, if literally understood, imported a corporeal presence of Christ; and such modes of expression were employed to excite the greater reverence for the institution, and it may be, in some cases, to display the eloquence of the speaker or writer. A notion was adopted by some, and brought forward in the controversy with the Eutychians, that there was a union between Christ and the elements, similar to that between the divine and human nature in his person. Now, although this notion supposed the elements to remain unchanged, to be bread and wine after as well as before consecration, as the human nature retains its essence and properties notwithstanding its personal subsistence in the divine; yet, it manifestly prepared the way, in connexion with the rhetorical language mentioned above, for the idea of a real transmutation which was afterwards broached. Ignorance was fast spreading over the Eastern, and particularly the Western church. Men without learning, and with only a form of religion, were the fit subjects of delusion, and would receive with little hesitation the most absurd and incredible opinions, if they were recommended by an air of mystery, and enjoined by the authority of priests.

It was in the ninth century that a real change of the substance of the elements in the Lord's Supper, was first openly and explicitly maintained. The author

\* 1 Cor. xi. 23—26.



of this heresy was Pascasius Radbert, abbot of Corbey in France, who, in a treatise concerning the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, taught "that after the consecration of the bread and wine, nothing remained of these symbols but the outward figure, under which the body and blood of Christ were really and locally present; and that the body of Christ thus present in the eucharist, was the same body which was born of the virgin, suffered on the cross, and was raised from the dead."\* This novel opinion met with powerful opposition from many distinguished persons of the age. In particular, by the command of the emperor Charles the Bold, Johannes Scotus, and Ratramn or Bertram, composed treatises with a view to state the true doctrine of the eucharist. The work of Scotus has perished; but that of Ratramn is preserved, and gives the same view of the subject which is adopted by the Protestant churches.† But the monstrous notion of Radbert accorded with the love of mystery, which has so powerful an influence upon a great part of mankind; and it was so well calculated to increase veneration for the clergy, and to consolidate their dominion over the people, that although clearly refuted, it would not be easily abandoned by those whose interest it was to maintain it. Revolting as it is to common sense, as well as contrary to the faith of the church in the preceding ages, it obtained powerful patronage, was gradually diffused among the nations of the west, and was finally established as an article of faith in the Church of Rome, under the name of Transubstantiation. It received its final sanction from the Council of Trent, which enacted the two following decrees. "If any man shall deny that in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, there are contained truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore a whole Christ; and shall say that they are only in it as in a sign, or by a figure, or virtually; let him be accursed." Again, "If any man shall say that in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, there remains the substance of the bread and wine, together with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and shall deny the wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and the whole substance of the wine into the blood, the species of bread and wine only remaining, which conversion the catholic church most fitly calls Transubstantiation; let him be accursed."‡

The doctrine of transubstantiation, which was at first rudely exhibited, required time, and labour, and ingenuity, to mould it into its present form. In order to explain it more distinctly, let me request your attention to the following particulars.

First, The Church of Rome teaches that the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ is not a sign or figure, as is the case in other sacraments, and particularly in baptism, in which water represents the influences of the Holy Ghost; but that the true body and blood of Christ are really and substantially present. Communicants receive not the sign, but the thing signified, for here they are identified.

Secondly, Whereas the eye sees nothing but bread and wine, Papists farther teach, that the substance of the elements is annihilated, and only the *species* remain. There is merely an appearance of bread and wine. The accidents, namely, the colour, the taste, the smell, the shape, are miraculously retained, while that which supported them is taken away. Our senses assure us that bread and wine are before us; but faith tells us that these are the incarnate Redeemer himself. We have accidents without a substance.

Thirdly, The Church of Rome teaches another mystery with respect to the corporeal presence of Christ. It has been always understood to be an essential property of body to be extended, as it consists of parts placed beyond parts,

\* Mosheim, Cent. ix. chap. iii. §. 19.

† Lib. de Corpore, 224, 284, et passim.

‡ Concil. Trid. Sess. 13, de Euchar. cap. viii. can. 1, 2.

which must occupy a certain portion of space; and such, therefore, it is acknowledged, is the body of our Saviour in heaven. But in the Eucharist, as they suppose, his body is present without extension. As we have seen that accidents may subsist without matter, so, it seems, matter may subsist without accidents; or, in other words, although extension is a property of body, there may be a body which is not extended. The body of Christ is present in the Eucharist, after the manner of a spirit; it does not fill up the space left vacant by the annihilation of the substance of the elements; that space is a pure vacuum, or is filled only by the accidents. Hence it follows, that the division of the elements does not divide the body and blood of Christ, for that which is not extended is not frangible and separable; but, in every particle of the bread, and in every drop of the wine, the whole body and blood of Christ are contained. If you should not comprehend all this, I cannot help it. It is enough to have stated fairly the doctrine of the Church. I am not obliged to make you understand what is absolutely unintelligible.

Fourthly, The change is effected when the following words are pronounced: "This is my body"—"This is my blood." Till this moment the elements were truly what they appeared to be, bread and wine; but as soon as the words are finished, they are transubstantiated. The words are evidently declarative; but Papists consider them as productive or creative. A virtue goes forth with them to effect the wonderful change, as it accompanied the words of the Apostles when they commanded the diseased to be whole; but the miracle is far more extraordinary than any which they performed, because nobody sees it, and still all are bound to believe it. When a common juggler performs his feats, one substance vanishes, and another appears in its place; but this is the wonder of wonders, that here there is a change of substances, yet no change is perceived, and all things continue exactly as they were. This is a happy circumstance for the Popish jugglers, as no dexterity is necessary to impose upon the senses, and all that is required is a sufficient degree of credulity in the spectators.

In defence of this doctrine, Papists appeal to the words of institution, and affirm that they must be understood in their obvious and literal sense. "This is my body," must mean, "This is truly my body;" and "This is my blood," "This is truly my blood." Yet, even they will not contend that other passages of Scripture, in which the phraseology is similar, should be subjected to the same rigid interpretation. They never suppose that, when our Lord said, "I am the vine," "I am the way," "I am the door," he meant us to understand that he is literally a vine, a way, and a door; but readily concede that we should put a spiritual sense upon such passages. It belongs, therefore, to them to assign a satisfactory reason why the same liberty should not be granted in explaining the words of institution. It may, indeed, be more justly claimed in the present than in any other case, because the words confessedly relate to a sacrament, in which symbols are employed; and nothing is more natural than to give the name of the thing signified to the sign.

It has been remarked, that, in the Hebrew and the Syriac, a dialect of which was spoken by our Lord, there is no word which expresses to *denote*, *signify*, or *represent*, and that its place is supplied by the verb of existence. When we would say, this thing *signifies* another thing, the Jews said, this thing *is* another thing. Thus the seven good kine and the seven ill-favoured kine in Pharaoh's dream, "are seven years,"\* that is, signify seven years of fertility or barrenness; the ten horns in Daniel, "are ten kings,"† or, are emblems of them; "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches,"‡ the stars and the candlesticks being representatives of the angels and the churches. There is one passage in par-

\* Gen. xli. 26, 27.

† Dan. vii. 24.

‡ Rev. i. 20.



ticular which exactly resembles the words under consideration, and is a sure guide in the interpretation of them, as it expressly refers to that ordinance, in the room of which the Lord's Supper has succeeded. Moses said of the paschal lamb, "It is the Lord's passover,"\* just as our Saviour said of the bread, "This is my body." The passover was the act of God, who passed over the houses of the Israelites; the lamb was only a memorial of it, and was so understood by every Israelite. Now, if we reflect that the Jews were accustomed, in this case to call the sign by the name of the thing signified, we shall perceive that the disciples were in no danger of mistaking their Master's meaning, when he called the bread, his body; that they must have instantly understood his design, and known that nothing more was intended than to constitute the bread a sign or memorial of his body, especially as he added, "This do in remembrance of me." The two expressions are so perfectly alike, that it is impossible to put any sense upon the one which may not be put upon the other; and it would be as rational to infer from the former, that the paschal lamb was God himself in the act of passing over the houses of the Israelites, as it would be to infer from the latter, that the bread is the very body of Christ which was born of the virgin, and nailed to the cross. It is evident that the disciples understood him simply to mean, that the bread was a sign and memorial of his body, from the circumstance that they expressed no surprise, and stated no objection, as they would have done if the doctrine of transubstantiation had occurred to them; and as the Jews did on another occasion, when they interpreted literally what he had said about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. "The Jews, therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"† The Jews in modern times retain their ancient idiom, and say that a thing is, when it only signifies or represents. At the celebration of the passover, they speak thus of the unleavened cakes which they use on that occasion: "This is the bread," that is, a memorial of the bread, "of poverty and affliction, which our fathers did eat in Egypt."

The language of the New Testament, in other places where the Lord's Supper is mentioned, is so far from favouring the doctrine of transubstantiation, that it expressly overthrows it. It is synecdochically called the breaking of bread; but this designation would be improper and false if there was a change of the substance, because then it would not be bread which was broken, but the true body of Christ. The Apostle Paul calls the symbol of our Saviour's body, bread, not only before but also after consecration.‡ Papists will allow that it is properly called bread before, but how can they account for the retaining of the name after the substance of bread is annihilated? Would they allow any member of their Church to call the consecrated wafer, bread? I presume that if he should dare to speak the language of the Apostle, he would be suspected of heresy, and compelled by threats and punishment to recant; and hence we may conclude, that Paul's ideas on this subject were very different from those of the Pope and his priests. He has explained himself in another place, in such a manner as to satisfy any reasonable man. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"§ The manifest import of these words is, that by partaking of the symbols of his body and blood, we have fellowship with him in his atoning sacrifice, and all its precious fruits.

Papists draw an argument for transubstantiation from the words of our Lord, in the sixth chapter of John, where he speaks of himself under the figure of bread which had come down from heaven, and then adds, "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."|| "When,

\* Exod. xii. 11. † John vi. 52. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 26—28. § Ib. x. 16. || John vi. 51.

therefore," says the Catechism of Pius the Fifth, "in so plain and clear words he called his flesh, bread, and true meat, and his blood, true drink, it might well seem sufficient to declare that there remains no substance of bread and wine in the sacrament."\* But the compilers of that catechism, and all Papists who make use of this argument, should have read the whole discourse, and read it attentively, and considered the occasion on which it was delivered: and they would have found that it has no relation to the Eucharist, and that instead of upholding, it overthrows their doctrine. It was delivered before the institution of the Eucharist; and to suppose that he spoke of it by anticipation, is to represent him as speaking unintelligibly from design, as he must have known that it was impossible for any person present to understand him. It is plain that he spoke of the benefits which were to result to the human race from his death, and of the spiritual participation of them by faith; for he says, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."† It is farther evident, that the Eucharist is not the subject of discourse, from two passages, of which the one declares, that "unless we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have no life in us;" and the other says, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."‡ If these passages refer to the sacrament of the Supper, it follows, that no man can be saved unless he partake of it, and that every person who does partake of it, shall be raised to immortal life. I do not know whether Papists will admit the first of these inferences, but the last they will reject; and if they would therefore explain Scripture, not by detached expressions, but according to its connexion and harmony, they must allow that our Saviour does not intend the sacramental eating of his flesh, but the cordial belief of his doctrine, which is frequently represented by the metaphors of eating and drinking. The Jews, it appears, understood what he had said in the same carnal sense which the Church of Rome annexes to the words of institution. Like the members of that Church, they took all grossly and literally, being equally incapable as they of apprehending the spiritual meaning. Misled by their own error, they were astonished, and no doubt shocked; as they well might be if theirs had been the just interpretation of his words. But our Lord told them that they were mistaken; and, as if with a view to reprove such of his professed followers as should afterwards dream of a real manducation of his body, he said, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."|| The meaning obviously is, that his words, which had given so much offence, were to be understood in a spiritual sense; that he did not speak of a literal eating of his body; and that, although such a thing had been practicable, it would have been productive of no salutary effect. Thus he overturns the whole fabric of transubstantiation, so far as it is founded upon this, and consequently upon any other passage; for his words must be spiritually understood elsewhere as well as here, the reason being always the same. As the supposed change of the elements is false, so it is pronounced by him to be useless. "The flesh profiteth nothing."

It is sufficient to show, that transubstantiation receives no support from Scripture, and is founded on such a perversion of its language as can be accounted for, only by the ignorance and superstition of the age when this monstrous opinion was invented. But there are several other objections against this doctrine, which fully justify the Protestant churches in rejecting it.

First, It destroys the nature of a sacrament. Two things are necessary to a sacrament, a sign and a thing signified, an object presented to our senses and some promised blessing which is represented and sealed by it. This definition is

\* Cat. Concil. Trident. Pars ii. *De Euch. Sacram.* § 37.

† John vi. 35.

‡ John vi. 53, 54.

|| Ib. 63.



admitted by the Church of Rome. The catechism of Pope Pius says, that, according to the Latin doctors, sacraments might conveniently be called "sensible signs, which work or effect that grace which at the same time they signify;" and it adopts the definition of Augustine, which has been universally followed, that "a sacrament is a visible sign of a holy thing," or "a visible sign of an invisible grace."\* Baptism accords with this definition, for water represents the purifying influences of the Spirit, and the sign is distinct from the thing signified. But by transubstantiation the sign is miraculously taken away, and the thing signified is put in its place. We say that the bread is a sign of the body of Christ; but Papists affirm that it is his body itself. It is true that there is still an appearance of bread, but it is only an appearance; and, besides that it would be strange and harsh to maintain, that a fallacious appearance is a sign given by God himself to his church, it would be absurd to make a thing the sign of itself. But this Papists do, while they hold that there is nothing real before us but the very body of Christ. Thus the Lord's Supper is no sacrament at all. The symbols are annihilated, and the substance occupies their place.

Secondly, Transubstantiation implies some things which are contrary to the clearest notions of all mankind, founded upon experience. It is by experience that we come to know what are the properties of body. Now there are three things respecting it, about which no doubt was ever entertained by any philosopher who was possessed of common sense. The first is, that a body is confined to a particular place. It has figure, and is bounded by lines describing the portion of space which it occupies. It may be transported from one place to another; but it appears to us as impossible that it should be in two places at the same time, in Europe and in America, in heaven and on earth, as that two and two should make five. The second thing concerning body, of which reason informs us, is, that it is extended. It consists of parts, each of which fills a certain portion of space; and the portion is greater or less, according to the aggregate of parts. To suppose matter to exist without extension, is as intelligible as to suppose it to exist without divisibility. The third thing, which is equally evident with the other two, is, that the qualities of matter are dependent upon matter. We know indeed only the qualities of matter; but we necessarily conclude that there is something to which they belong, a substratum by which they are supported. We can form no conception of whiteness, if there is nothing white; of roundness, if there is nothing round; of extension, if there is nothing extended. To imagine that there may be accidents without a substance, is not more rational than to imagine that there may be thought without a thinking being, and would lead us into the ideal philosophy, which affirms that there is no external world, and that the objects which appear to be without us, are only sensations or perceptions of the mind excited by some unknown cause.

Transubstantiation is at variance with these dictates of reason. First, It supposes a body to be, at the same time, in more places than one. It is in heaven at the right hand of God, and it is on earth on the altars of the Romish Church. It does not come down from heaven to earth; but it remains in heaven, and yet is upon earth. It is present, not in one place on earth only, but in a thousand places, in the east and the west, the north and the south; wherever a priest has, with a due intention, pronounced the words of institution. It is not present, as a piece of matter may be, by being divided into different parts, and carried hither and thither; but it is wholly present in Rome, wholly present in Paris, wholly present in this city, wholly present wherever mass is celebrated. I may add, that the human nature of Christ, according to this doctrine, exists at the same moment in very different states. It is glorified on the throne of heaven, and humbled on the altar; it is seen and adored

\* *PARS II. de Sacram. § 3, 5.*

by the blessed spirits above, and concealed from men under the species of the elements. This simple statement is itself sufficient to show, that the wildest dream of a madman is not more absurd than the doctrine of transubstantiation. Secondly, It supposes, as I showed when giving you an account of the doctrine, that matter may subsist without extension. The body and blood of Christ are really and substantially present in the Eucharist; but they occupy no portion of space. It would have been natural to conclude, that when the elements are annihilated, their place was filled up with that into which they are changed; but wonderful as this would have been, we are required to believe something still more extraordinary. Here is the mystery of mysteries! We touch the bread, and feel that it is a solid substance; but let us not mistake. It is not bread; it is not flesh; what is it? It is an assemblage of accidents, which have no substance, and are mere appearances. There is flesh indeed present; but it cannot be touched, for it is present after the manner of a spirit. You may divide this bread, or this flesh, or this assemblage of accidents, into a thousand parts; but in each of these parts the whole of Christ is contained. Now, what is this but to say, that there is matter which is not matter; that is, to assert, without disguise, the most palpable contradiction? A man may say that he believes it; but to do so is as impossible as to believe that a thing may be and not be at the same time. Lastly, The doctrine supposes that the properties of matter may be separated from it, and may subsist by themselves. Our senses tell us that the consecrated wafer is bread. It looks like bread, it tastes like bread, it smells like bread; but still it is not bread, but both flesh and blood, according to the doctrine of concomitance, which will be afterwards explained. What is more, the space which the bread originally occupied is a vacuum, for the body of Christ is present without extension. Here, then, we have extension where there is nothing extended; colour where there is nothing coloured; taste and smell where there is nothing saporific or fragrant. If any person should affirm it to be possible that a man's shape and features might continue to be visible, after he had been removed out of sight, even Papists would pronounce him to be a fool or a madman; but they are unquestionably subject to the same charge, when they teach that all the properties of bread may remain after the bread itself is annihilated.

But Papists have recourse to a miracle, and tell us, that although these things respecting matter and its properties are true, according to the ordinary course of nature, God acts in this case, by his almighty power, in an extraordinary manner. We acknowledge that his power is infinite, that it can do many things which to us are inconceivable, that it is able to accomplish events in a manner different from, and contrary to, the course of nature. But observe, that it is one thing to be contrary to the course of nature, and another to be contrary to the nature of things. When God preserved the three Jewish confessors in a furnace, he did not change the nature of fire, or make it cold, but merely defended their bodies, in some way unknown to us, from its influence. When he made a piece of iron swim upon water, he did not render water solid or iron light, but supported it by his power, as a man might have done with his hand. There was no alteration of the essence and qualities of the substances which were the subjects of those miracles, but a suspension of the laws by which they are usually governed. The pretended miracle of transubstantiation is of a totally different description. It supposes a complete change of the nature of things. It supposes effects to be produced which are manifestly impossible, and which it is therefore no limitation even of Divine power to affirm that even it cannot perform. The just definition of almighty power is, that it can do every thing possible; things impossible are not the objects of power, any more than things which do not exist are the objects of sight. Now, it is contrary to the nature of body, that it should be in different places



at the same time; for it necessarily enters into the idea of it, that it occupies a particular portion of space. It is contrary to its nature, that it should exist after the manner of a spirit, or without filling any portion of space; for extension is as essential to it as life is to a living being. It is contrary to its nature, that its properties should remain after it is annihilated; for its properties are modifications which as necessarily exist with their subject, as the shadow disappears with the body which projected it. The ubiquity of a particular body, is want of extension, and the continuance of its qualities after its destruction, are things absolutely impossible; and to appeal to the power of God, serves only to confound the minds of those who are too ignorant or too indolent to examine the subject with accuracy. These things even the power of God cannot do, because they cannot be done. They imply a contradiction; and we might with equal reason say, that although two and two are four, yet divine power could make them five. To every mind but that of a Papist, the contradiction is as manifest in the one case as in the other.

Thirdly, Transubstantiation contradicts the testimony of our senses, which assure us, as we have repeatedly observed, that there is no change of the elements. Our senses are the means by which we become acquainted with external things and their properties; and as we are instinctively led to confide in their evidence, so we find from experience, that the notices which they give us are true. The offices which they perform are of the most important nature. They are not only our guides in providing for the welfare of our bodies, and guarding against the dangers to which they are exposed; but it is by them that we perceive the proofs of the existence and perfections of God, in creation and providence; and to them were addressed the proofs of the supernatural communications which he has made to us concerning his gracious purposes, and the realities of the invisible world. If it be said, that our senses frequently deceive us, we acknowledge the fact, but deny that on this account their evidence should be suspected. They deceive us when they are in a diseased state, when their functions are carelessly performed, when the object is in such a situation as not to be fully subjected to their test; but, in other circumstances, their testimony is infallible. No man whose eye is sound, supposes an object which is green to be red, or mistakes a bush for an animal, when it is near; no man in health calls sugar sour, or vinegar sweet. About these things there is no question, except among sceptical philosophers, who do not believe, or at least pretend not to believe, the evidence of their senses, while they rely upon it as implicitly as any of the vulgar.

The doctrine of transubstantiation subverts the evidence of our senses. We see bread and wine in the Eucharist; we smell them, and we taste them; and yet we are told that they are not bread and wine, but a collection of unsubstantial accidents, under which the body and blood of Christ are concealed. Here, then, is one case in which our senses deceive us, and how can we depend upon their testimony in any other case? If they have misled us once, they may mislead us a thousand times. Should it be said that the deception, for such we must call it, is in this instance effected by a miracle, it may be asked, How are we certain that we shall not be imposed upon by a miracle on other occasions? How shall we know when the notices of our senses are true, and when they are fallacious? If God had told us, that in this case alone he would impose upon our senses, but in all others would leave them to their natural operations, we might have been satisfied. But he has told us no such thing, and consequently we are reduced to the greatest perplexity. We can never be absolutely sure that objects are as they appear to us. What we imagine to be a tree may be a man; what we suppose to be earth, may be water. We can have no certainty that the miracles of Christ and his Apostles were really performed

Those who are said to have witnessed them, may have been the subjects of illusion; and it would not have been more wonderful if they had mistaken common occurrences for supernatural events, than it is that every time when the holy Supper is celebrated, the incarnate Son of God should seem to be a piece of bread. Transubstantiation leads to downright scepticism. We can neither believe our own eyes and ears, nor give credit to the testimony of others. But a doctrine which leads to scepticism must be false. A doctrine cannot be true which contradicts the evidence of sense, any more than a doctrine which contradicts the dictates of reason. Both are from God, as well as revelation; by both God speaks to us; and what is contrary to their testimony in their proper sphere, cannot proceed from Him who is never at variance with himself.

For this imposition upon our senses, the Church of Rome accounts in the following manner: "Since it is the most horrid thing in the world to the nature of men," says the catechism of the council of Trent, "to be fed with man's flesh, or to drink his blood, God has most wisely ordered, that his most holy body and blood should be administered to us under the species of those things, bread and wine, by whose common and daily use and nourishment we are mostly delighted. And there are adjoined these two conveniences, whereof the first is, that we are freed from the reproach of infidels, which we could not easily have avoided, if we should be seen to eat our Lord under his own species. The other is, that while we thus take the body and blood of the Lord, in such a manner, that notwithstanding what is truly done cannot be perceived by the senses, this avails very much to increase faith in our souls."\* The amount of this reasoning is, that transubstantiation is a miracle which God has found it expedient to conceal, lest Christians should be disgusted, and infidels should laugh; although it is not easy to see how its concealment can hinder the ridicule of infidels, as they are solemnly assured by the infallible church, that this shocking transmutation does actually take place, and that flesh and blood are really swallowed under a different form.

It was impossible that a doctrine so contrary to Scripture, to reason, and to our senses, should have been adopted but by slow degrees, and in an age of gross ignorance and superstition. It is astonishing that it should be retained amidst the increase of knowledge which distinguishes modern times, and after its impiety and absurdity have been so successfully exposed; and that not only should it obtain credit among the vulgar of the church of Rome, but men of genius and learning should be implicit believers of it. Where can we find a stronger proof of the power of prejudice in blinding the mind, than when we observe such a man as Pascal, not to mention many others, adopting and defending an opinion, the absurdity of which he would, in different circumstances, have been the first to perceive, and to expose with unrivalled eloquence. "We should go out of the state in which we are," he says in his *Lettres Provinciales*,† "which is a state of faith, and is opposed by Paul as much to the law as to clear vision, if we possessed only the figures without Jesus Christ, because it is the property of the law to have only the shadow, and not the substance of things; and we should go out of it also, if we possessed him visibly, because faith, as the same Apostle says, is not of things which are seen. Thus the Eucharist is perfectly proportioned to our state of faith, because it truly includes Jesus Christ, but under a veil; so that this state would be destroyed, if Jesus Christ were not really under the species of bread and wine, as heretics pretend; and it would be also destroyed, if we received him openly as in heaven, since this would confound our state with the state of the Jews, or with that of glory. This is the reason of this divine mystery. This makes us abhor the Calvinists as reducing us to the condition of the Jews, and aspire to

\* *Pars ii. de Euch. Sac.* § 46.

† *Let. xvi.*



the glory of the blessed, which will give us the full and eternal enjoyment of Jesus Christ. Hence we see that there are many differences between the manner in which he is communicated to Christians and to the blessed, and that among others, he is received here by the mouth, and not so in heaven; but that all the differences depend solely upon the difference between the state of faith in which we are, and the state of clear vision in which they are."

Whatever ingenuity may be displayed in this passage, it is liable to this objection, that it assumes the doctrine of transubstantiation to be true, and then proceeds to prove its truth by a mistaken view of its adaptation to the present condition of the church. The argument entirely fails. The difference between us and the Jews does not consist in our having Christ really and corporeally under a veil, while they had the figure without the substance; but in the fulfilment of the types in the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ, by which the full enjoyment of all spiritual blessings has been obtained. The superior excellence of the Christian dispensation does not arise from the bodily presence of the Saviour, but from the clear revelation of him in the gospel, and the abundant communication of grace, in consequence of his ascension into heaven. Any person who reads the Scriptures without prejudice will perceive, that these are expressly mentioned as the privileges of the present church, while there is not a single hint concerning such a presence of Christ as Papists imagine. When the Apostle Paul represents him as a High Priest of good things to come, or in whom the figures of the law have been realized, he, at the same time, describes him as a High Priest who has passed into the heavens. It is equally a mistake to suppose the difference between the militant and the triumphant church to be, that although both are favoured with his bodily presence, he is veiled from the saints on earth, but manifested to the saints in heaven. This statement is directly opposed to that of Paul, who expressly affirms this to be the difference, that on earth we are absent from the Lord, and in heaven we shall be present with him. "Knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."\* This single passage overthrows the idea, that in the Eucharist he is present with us, but under a veil.

Transubstantiation is not only contrary to Scripture, and reason, and common sense, but it leads and has led to other dangerous errors. A view of these will tend more fully to expose the doctrine, and to show that it is not a harmless absurdity. It has polluted the Church of Rome with idolatry, obscured the glory of the sacrifice of Christ, and given rise to the audacious mutilation of the sacred institution of the Supper. These consequences will be considered in the next lecture.

\* 2 Cor. v. 6, 8.

## LECTURE XCI.

ON THE

## SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Errors Consequent on Transubstantiation; Idolatry; Sacrifice of the Mass; Mutilation of the Sacrament.—Lutheran Doctrine of Consubstantiation.—Objections to it.—Doctrine of Zuinglius Respecting this Rite, and of Calvin.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION is not a speculative opinion, which, although erroneous in itself, leads to no practical consequences of an objectionable nature. While there is sufficient reason to reject it for its contrariety to Scripture, and reason, and common sense, it will appear worthy of reprobation to every person who considers the other dangerous errors to which it has given rise.

The first which I shall point out to you, is the idolatry which is founded on the doctrine of transubstantiation. When the priest has changed the bread into the body of Christ, by pronouncing the words, "*Hoc est corpus meum*," he adores it with bended knee, and rising, elevates it, that it may be seen and adored by the people. The same forms are observed after he has consecrated the wine. Such is the order of procedure in the Roman missal; and it is founded upon the doctrine of the church as declared by the Council of Trent. "There is no room for doubt, that all believers in Christ, according to the custom always received in the catholic church, should offer to this most holy sacrament the worship of Latria, which is due to the true God, for it is not to be the less adored, because it was instituted by Christ our Lord to be taken. For we believe that the same God is present in it, whom the eternal Father, introducing into the world, says, "Let all the angels of God worship him." This declaration is supported by the following canon. "If any man shall say, that in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is not to be adored, even with the external worship of Latria; and therefore that it is not to be venerated by a peculiar festival, nor carried about in processions, according to the laudable rite and custom of the universal church, nor to be publicly exhibited to the people that it may be adored, and that those who worship it are idolaters; let him be accursed."\*

Notwithstanding this dreadful denunciation, we do not hesitate to affirm that the worship of the elements is idolatry. One argument might suffice to establish this charge, namely, that we have proved that there is no such thing as transubstantiation, to the satisfaction of every person whom God has not given up to strong delusion to believe a lie. If our former reasonings are conclusive, the elements are simple bread and wine; and those who worship them are as gross idolaters as the heathens, who adored a naked sword or a shapeless stone. It may be thought that, although Christ should not be present in the elements, yet, as they suppose him to be present, and direct their worship to him, their mistake will excuse them. But it is not our intention, it is the law of God which is the rule of our conduct; and to suppose our intention to be a valid apology for our transgression of it, is to set aside the authority of the law, and make man a law to himself. In no part of Scripture are we commanded to worship the elements; nor are we commanded to worship God in every thing, or in any thing in which he is present. We are to worship himself, but not the objects around us, under the pretext that we worship God himself, who is in them. It may be said that there is a difference in the present case, because what we see is

\* Sessio xiii. de Euch. cap. v. et can. 6.



Christ himself in his body, and blood, and Divinity. But, granting that it is Christ, we may still question whether, as he does not manifest himself to us, we are authorized to worship him here, any more than in the sun, in which we are certain that his Divinity, the proper object of worship, is as truly present as in the sacrament. Besides, the Church of Rome commands us to worship the "sacrament," which undoubtedly signifies not only Christ corporeally present, but the species which remain. Now, if the accidents can subsist by themselves, as they suppose that they do, they are created things, however shadowy; and he, therefore, who adores the whole sacrament, worships them together with Christ, or the creature together with the Creator; the veil, as well as the thing veiled; the dress, as well as the person who wears it; and how can he escape the charge of idolatry? Although the doctrine of transubstantiation were true, no Papist can be certain that Christ is in the sacrament; and consequently, upon his own principles, he may be guilty of idolatry every time that he partakes of it. If the intention of the priest is wanting, the elements remain simple bread and wine. But this is not the only ground of apprehension. "If the bread is not of wheat," says the Roman missal, "or if, being of wheat, it is mixed with grain of another kind, in such quantity that it is not wheaten bread, or is otherwise corrupted, the sacrament is not effected. If it is made of rose water, or of any other distillation, it is doubtful whether it is effected." Again, "If the wine is turned into vinegar, or is wholly putrid, or is made of sour or unripe grapes, or is mixed with so much water that the wine is corrupted, the sacrament is not effected." Once more, "If any man shall diminish, or change any thing in the form of consecration, and by the change of the words, the words have not the same signification, the sacrament will not be effected."\* This mighty miracle, it seems, depends upon many pre-requisites, the omission of which will completely prevent it. Here, as in the incantation of magic, unless the *ipsissima verba* are repeated, the expected effect will not follow. It appears, too, that there are some substances which cannot be converted into the body and blood of our Saviour, as, sour wine, and bread made of barley or oats; but how they happen to be so stubborn as to retain their nature, in spite of all the power of the priest, we must leave to the abettors of this mystery to explain. It is evident that, according to their own ideas, they are in constant danger of idolatry. It is their concern to extricate themselves as they can.

The second error founded on transubstantiation, is the notion that the Eucharist is a true and proper sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead, or the souls in purgatory; Christ who is corporeally present, is not only given to the communicants, but is offered to God as a propitiation for them. The Council of Trent expressly affirms that this sacrament is a sacrifice by which God is appeased, and that its benefit extends not only to men upon earth, but to the departed saints who are not yet fully purified; and in the usual manner, anathematizes every man who shall dare to controvert its decision. "If any man shall say that, in the mass, a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God;" or shall say, "that in these words, 'This do in remembrance of me,' Christ did not constitute the Apostles priests, or did not ordain that they and other priests should offer his body and blood;" or shall say, "that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, or a naked commemoration of the sacrifice made upon the cross, but not propitiatory: let him be accursed."† The subject is farther explained in the catechism which was published by order of the council. "The Eucharist was instituted, that the church might have a perpetual sacrifice, whereby our sins might be expiated, and our heavenly Father, who has oftentimes been grievously offended by our wicked-

\* *De Defect. circa Missam occurrentibus*, iii, iv, et v.

† *Sess. xxii. de Sacrif. Missae*, can. 1, 2, & 3.

ness, might be turned from his anger to mercy, and from the severity of his just revenge to pity. We may observe the figure and resemblance of this thing in the paschal lamb, which was used to be offered as a sacrifice, and eaten as a sacrament by the children of Israel."\*

The great argument for the sacrifice of the mass, is apostolical tradition, by which they mean any thing which was said or done by some dreaming dotard or superstitious fool in remote ages, and which other dotards and fools were pleased to admire, and to retain as wise and good. But as, notwithstanding the high authority which they ascribe to tradition, they are well pleased when they can find any appearance of support from Scripture, they have drawn from it some new arguments to confirm the faithful, and to confound heretics. Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine to Abraham, when he was returning from the slaughter of the kings. This is a very simple fact, which it might be supposed, has no relation to the subject before us; but, if we lack ingenuity, Papists have it in perfection, and have discovered in this transaction the whole mystery of the sacrifice of the Eucharist.† How they know, we cannot tell; but Melchizedek, it seems, offered the bread and wine to God, before he presented them to Abraham. Now, Melchizedek was a priest, and Christ is a priest after his order; and therefore he must have instituted an unbloody sacrifice, under the species of bread and wine. Some of us, perhaps, do not perceive the connexion between the premises and the conclusion; but this is owing to our blindness. If we had lived in the days of the power and triumph of antichrist, the inquisition would have opened our eyes. To be serious, it is plain, beyond all reasonable dispute, that, although Melchizedek was a priest, and in this character blessed Abraham, his giving him bread and wine was a mere act of hospitality.—Again, it is said, in the prophecies of Malachi, "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering."‡ Now, what can this pure offering be but the sacrifice of the mass, which is presented to God on a thousand altars, in the east and in the west? But, if these blundering interpreters, who seem totally incapable of distinguishing when a passage should be understood literally, and when figuratively, would adhere uniformly to their plan, they would maintain that the whole Mosaic ritual should be revived; for the worship of the Gentiles in the times of the gospel, is described in language borrowed from it, and they are represented as bringing their burnt-offerings and sacrifices to the sanctuary.§ If, in such passages, the literal sense is rejected by all, what reason can be given for retaining it on this occasion? Why should we suppose that the "pure offering" of Malachi is a real sacrifice any more than the "burnt-offerings" of Isaiah? Why should we not admit that, in the one case as well as in the other, there is only a metaphorical application of the religious terms of the Old Testament to the New, and that the peace-offering and the incense are the holy sacrifices of prayer and praise? This is beyond all question the meaning; and the Church of Rome is driven to the most wretched shifts, when it seeks support from a solitary passage, which the laws of sound criticism require to be explained in conformity to other similar passages.—A third argument is founded on the declaration, that Christ is "a priest for ever;"|| which they cannot conceive to be true, unless he continue to offer sacrifice for sin. And here they give a curious account of the mass, making it, although we should naturally suppose it to be a new sacrifice, in fact the very sacrifice which was offered upon the cross; and, at the same time, that, while they say that this sacrifice is offered by their priests, they may not seem to destroy the perpetuity of his priesthood by giving him successors in office, they identify the priests

\* Pars ii. de Euch. Sac. § 75.

† Mal. i. 11.

§ Is. lvi. 7

‡ Cat. Trid. Pars ii. de Euch. Sac. § 80.

|| Heb. vii. 21.



of the Romish Church with the High Priest of our profession. "We acknowledge it to be, and it ought to be accounted, but one and the same sacrifice, which is done in the mass, and was offered on the cross." "There is one and the same priest, Christ the Lord: for the ministers who make this sacrifice, sustain not their own but the person of Christ, when they consecrate his body and blood, as is evident from the words of consecration; for the priest says not, 'This is Christ's body,' but, 'This is my body:' bearing the person of Christ our Lord, he changes the substance of the bread and wine into the true substance of his body and blood."\* But this is a mere shift; for, as the ministers of antichrist are supposed to be real priests, and to offer a real sacrifice, although they represent Christ, and act in his name, they are unquestionably as much distinct priests as were the successors of Aaron; and if it should be said that there is only one priesthood, namely, that of Christ, which they as his ministers exercise, the same thing might be said of the Levitical priesthood, which was one, although its functions were performed by many individuals. According to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, Christ has successors in office, and therefore is not a Priest for ever, in the sense of the Scriptures, which compare him to Melchizedek, because no person comes after him. Thus the argument which they advance to support the sacrifice of the mass, condemns it, since the priesthood of Christ is not perpetual if its functions are committed to other hands.

It is an astonishing blunder to suppose that the perpetuity of his priesthood requires the uninterrupted repetition of his sacrifice. Is sacrificing the only duty of a priest? Is not intercession an essential part of his office? And if our Lord Jesus Christ offered a sacrifice once, which fully accomplished its design by appeasing Divine justice, and obtaining eternal redemption, and has gone into the celestial sanctuary to intercede for his people upon earth, is it not true that he is made a priest "after the power of an endless life?"† Why should his sacrifice be repeated? Was there any defect in the first oblation, which is supplied by the ministrations of the priests of Rome? The sacrifice of the mass is derogatory to our Saviour in the character of our High Priest, and is directly opposed to the reasoning of Paul on this subject, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. His manifest design is to demonstrate the superiority of Christ to the priests of the law in every respect, and particularly in this, that they offered many sacrifices, but he offered only one, which does not need to be repeated: "He offered himself once." "By one offering he has for ever perfected them that are sanctified;" and "having, by himself, purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."‡

The third error arising from transubstantiation, is the mutilation of the sacrament, by the withholding of the cup from the laity. Hear the Council of Trent! "The holy synod, taught by the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and piety, and following the judgment and practice of the church, declares and teaches, that the laity, and the clergy when not officiating, are not bound, by any Divine precept, to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist under both kinds." It goes on to state, that the church has authority to make such changes in the dispensation of the sacraments as shall be found expedient. "Wherefore," it is added, "the holy mother, the church, acknowledging this her authority in the administration of the sacraments, although, from the beginning of the Christian religion, the use of both kinds was not unfrequent, being induced by weighty and just causes, in consequence of the extensive change of practice in the progress of time, has approved this practice of communicating under one kind, and decreed that it should be a law:" "And farther declares, that, although our Redeemer, in the last supper, instituted this sacrament in two kinds, and so delivered it to

\* Cat. Trid. Pars ii. *De Euch. Sac.* § 81, 82. † Heb. vii. 16. ‡ Heb. vii. 29. x. 14. i. 3

the Apostles, yet under one kind only, whole and entire Christ, and the true sacrament, are taken; and that, therefore, those who receive only one kind, are deprived of no grace necessary to salvation.”\* It is worthy of particular attention, that the Council does not plead, on this occasion, either Scripture or apostolical tradition; that it acknowledges both kinds, the bread and the wine, to have been instituted by Christ, and the ordinance to have been thus celebrated in the primitive times; and yet, that it has the effrontery to declare, that one kind constitutes a perfect sacrament, and that thus only it should be observed. In all the proceedings of the apostate church, there is not an instance of more undisguised and avowed opposition to the authority of Christ. It might have gone on with no greater impiety to abolish baptism, or the Sabbath, or any other ordinance. Yet, without pretending any authority but that of “the church,” the holy synod, as it calls itself, pronounces a curse upon every man who shall affirm, that, by the command of God, both kinds should be received; that the Holy Catholic Church has not sufficient reasons for denying the cup to the laity; and that whole and entire Christ is not received under the species of bread alone.†

You will be curious to know what are the weighty reasons by which the church has been induced to make this essential change in the original institution. You shall hear them. “First, Great care was to be taken lest the blood of our Lord should be spilt upon the ground, and this did not seem easy to be avoided if it should be administered among a great multitude of people. Secondly, Since the sacred Eucharist ought to be in readiness for the sick, it was much to be feared that, if the species of wine were to be kept somewhat longer, it might become sour.” The catechism of Pope Pius, from which these reasons are extracted, does not tell us what would be the consequence; but as, if the wine is sour at first, it is not changed into the blood of Christ by the words of consecration, the danger to be apprehended probably is, that, if the species, that is, the accidents, should become sour, the blood would be turned again into wine. “Thirdly, There are very many who can by no means endure the taste, nor so much, indeed, as the very smell of wine. Fourthly, Wherefore, lest that which was given for the sake of spiritual health might hurt the health of the body, it was very wisely established by the church that the faithful should receive only the species of bread. Fifthly. This may be added to the other reasons, that in very many countries they have a very great scarcity of wine, nor can they procure it from other places, but with great charges, and with tedious and difficult journies. Lastly, What is most of all to the purpose, the heresy of those was to be rooted up who denied, that whole Christ is in each species, and asserted that the body only, without the blood, is contained in the species of bread, and that the blood was contained under that of wine. Now, therefore, that the truth of the Catholic faith might be more evidently placed before our eyes, the communion of one species, that is, of bread, was wisely introduced.”‡

This last reason is founded on the doctrine of *concomitance*. This term is used by the Popish Church to signify that whole Christ is present under either of the species.§ Although the bread is said to be changed into his body, and the wine into his blood, yet his body and blood are not to be considered as in a state of separation. Wherever his body is, there is his blood; and wherever his blood is, there is his body. Both are present under each of the species; and if you divide the species of bread into particles, and the wine into drops, Christ is in every one of them, in his body, soul, and Divinity, as much as in the whole bread and the whole wine. Hence you perceive how the denial of the cup to the laity has originated in transubstantiation. It was first supposed

\* Sessio. xxi. *de Com. sub utraq. spec.* cap. 1, 2, 3.

† Cat. Con. Trid. Pars ii. *de Euch. Sac.* § 70.

‡ Ib. can. 1, 2, 3.

§ Ib. § 33.



that he was corporeally present in the Eucharist; and then it followed, as Christ cannot be divided, that whoever received one species, was as fully a partaker of him as if he had received both species. The cup was superfluous; nothing was lost by its being withheld. By the same reasoning it might have been given to the laity, and the bread been denied.

As the Church of Rome believes the doctrine of concomitance to be true, it should have the same effect in relation to the priests as to the people; and as the priests receive a whole Christ under the species of bread, there is no good reason why the cup should be given to them any more than to others. It was necessary, however, to make a distinction between them and the laity, and to secure that profound veneration for their persons as sacred, which it is the great object of the whole system to maintain. But the doctrine of concomitance is false, because its foundation is false. There is a peculiar absurdity in it; for the Church of Rome exhibits separately the signs of the body and blood of Christ, and at the same time assures us that they are not separate but conjoined. For what purpose were separate symbols instituted, if the things which they signify are blended together, or the one is included in the other? Whatever papists may affirm, as the Lord's Supper is a memorial of his death, he is represented in it as dead, and his blood as poured out from his body as an atonement for sin. They exist separately in the signs, and are given separately to the communicants. To affirm, therefore, that they are concomitant, or that either of the symbols comprehends both, is to destroy the meaning, and to defeat the design of the institution. As they do not plead Scripture or apostolical tradition for taking away the cup from the people, there is no occasion to bring forward arguments in refutation of their practice. They are self-condemned; they acknowledge that the word of God, and the primitive church, are against them. We are fully warranted to affirm, that the Eucharist, as administered by them, is no sacrament, an essential part being wanting. The command to drink the wine is as express as the command to eat the bread; and with respect to the former, our Saviour has been more explicit, as he foresaw the daring impiety of the followers of Antichrist. Of the bread, he simply said, according to Matthew's account, "Take, eat;" but when he gave the cup, he said "drink ye all of it."\*

I proceed to lay before you the opinions of Protestants respecting the Lord's Supper; and I shall begin with that of the Lutheran Church.

Although Luther perceived the absurdity of transubstantiation, and renounced it, yet the literal interpretation of our Saviour's words, to which he had so long been accustomed, retained a firm hold of his mind, and led him to adopt an opinion equally unintelligible and unscriptural. He believed, that although the bread and wine are not changed into the body and blood of Christ, yet that his real body and blood are received by the communicants along with the symbols. This is called *consubstantiation*, to signify that the substance of the body and blood of Christ is present in, with, or under the substance of the elements; and sometimes *impanation*, a word which imports that he is in the bread. Papists say that the substance of the elements is annihilated, and only the accidents remain; Lutherans affirm that they retain their proper nature, and that the human nature of Christ is mysteriously conjoined with them. Luther indeed pretended to give an explanation of his doctrine by saying, that as fire and iron are united, so the body of Christ is joined to the bread in the Eucharist. His followers, however, acknowledge that it is a mystery which we cannot comprehend, but which we are bound to believe on the authority of Scripture, and however incredible this union may seem to us, the almighty power of God is able to effect it.

Luther supported his doctrine by this argument, that Christ is at the right

\* Matth. xxvi. 27.

land of God, and the right hand of God is everywhere; but he afterwards abandoned it, and with good reason. The right hand of God does not signify his power, which is omnipresent as his essence is, but the highest glory and authority. It is a figurative expression, which when interpreted according to the laws of sound criticism, appears not to have the most remote connexion with the subject in question; for by no species of reasoning does it follow, that the human nature of our Saviour is omnipresent, because it is exalted above all principalities and powers. If the "right hand of God" has any relation to place, it is in the higher regions of the universe; and Christ "sitting at it," overthrows the doctrine of consubstantiation, for God is said to have "set him at his right hand in the heavenly places."\* The argument was revived by some of the followers of Luther, who maintained the ubiquity of the human nature of Christ, and accounted for it by the power of God; which they alleged, could render it omnipresent; or by the personal union between it and his divine nature, in consequence of which the properties of the latter were communicated to the former. An appeal to the power of God overawes the mind, and there is an appearance of presumption and impiety in calling in question the possibility of any thing which is said to be done by it. But as it is no limitation of the divine omniscience, that it does not know what is unknowable, so it is no limitation of omnipotence, to say that it cannot perform what is impossible. God cannot make a circle square, because it would then cease to be a circle; or a rod strait and crooked at the same time, because the thing implies a contradiction. In like manner, he cannot make the body of Christ omnipresent, because place or locality is an attribute of body, and to ascribe omnipresence to it is to destroy its essence. Lutherans indeed have assigned a double presence to it, the one circumscribed and local, and the other celestial, supernatural, and divine. But this is an arbitrary distinction contrived to support their hypothesis, and besides it destroys itself; for if the human nature of Christ have a local presence, it cannot also have ubiquity; and if it have ubiquity, it cannot at the same time be confined to a place. The communication of the properties of the divine to the human nature is inconceivable, and would not have been admitted, but as an expedient to extricate them from a difficulty. The doctrine of the church in all ages,—and it is agreeable to Scripture,—has been that the two natures of Christ, although hypostatically united, continue distinct; that each retains its peculiar attributes; that omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, although predicated of the person, belong to him only as God; and that the sole effect of the union with respect to the human nature, is to enhance the value of its actions, which are truly the actions of the only-begotten of the Father. To suppose that divine properties are communicated to the human nature, is to confound the Creator with the creature; and it may be confidently affirmed to be impossible even for omnipotence to make that infinite which is finite.

Consubstantiation is liable to many of the same objections which may be advanced against transubstantiation. It supposes the body of Christ to be at the same time in heaven and on earth, in Europe and in America; it supposes it to be in a state of glory, and in a state of humiliation; it supposes it to be present, and yet to be imperceptible to any of our senses, and therefore to be present after the manner of a spirit; it supposes it to be taken into the mouths of the communicants, and chewed, and swallowed, and digested; it supposes that at the last supper, Christ sat at table with his disciples, and was at the same time in the bread; that he held himself in his hand, and then transferred himself from his own hand into the hands of the Apostles; and that while they saw him at some distance from them, he was in their mouths. How strong is the power of prejudice, which can make any man believe, or imagine that he

\* Eph. i. 20.



believes such absurdities! After this, there is nothing so monstrous and incredible which he might not be prevailed upon to acknowledge, if he were first persuaded that it is taught in the Scriptures.

That consubstantiation is not taught in the Scriptures, might be proved by all the arguments which have been adduced to show, that the literal interpretation of the words, "This is my body," "This is my blood," is false. These it is unnecessary to go over again, as they were so lately laid before you. It deserves attention, that the interpretation of the Lutheran church is more forced and unnatural than that of the Romish church. The Papist, suspecting no figure in the case, with childish simplicity takes the words as they stand, "this bread is my body," and believes that the one is miraculously changed into the other. The Lutheran employs some thought, and exercises a little ingenuity, and finds that the words signify, not "This bread is my body," but "This bread contains my body." By what law does he deviate from the strict interpretation? Where does he find, that the verb of existence, *is*, signifies *in*, *with*, or *under*? Not in any of the canons of criticism, but in the necessity of his system, which cannot be supported without this explanation. Hence it is evident, that the Papist has the advantage of the Lutheran; and that, if the words are to be literally understood, they favour transubstantiation, and consubstantiation is founded on a perversion of them. Both doctrines are contrary to Scripture, as well as to reason and common sense; but that of Lutherans offers more direct violence to the words of inspiration.

However objectionable consubstantiation may be, it is, when compared with the favourite dogma of Papists, a harmless absurdity, as it is not clogged with the impious consequences which are deduced from transubstantiation. Although Lutherans believe the corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament, they condemn the worship of it as idolatrous; they do not maintain the sacrifice of the mass, nor withhold the cup from the laity. It is an opinion which has no influence upon their practice, and does not lead them into error respecting other doctrines of religion. On this account, it has been regarded by the Reformed churches with less displeasure than the Popish tenet, and has been considered by many as not constituting an insurmountable obstacle to the communion between them.

The opinion of Zuinglius comes next to be considered. Although he does not hold so distinguished a place as Luther in the history of the Protestant Churches, yet it is certain that he preceded him in openly opposing the errors and corruptions of the Church of Rome, made earlier and more rapid progress in the knowledge of the truth, and entertained far more enlightened views on the subject of the Eucharist than the German Reformer. He began to preach the gospel, as we are informed by himself, the year before Luther first declaimed against indulgences, and while the name of the latter was unknown in Switzerland. "He saw," as Melchior Adam relates in his life, "the error of transubstantiation, or of the substantial conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, the accidents only remaining; he saw that the dogma of consubstantiation, or impanation, that is, of the corporeal presence of Christ in the bread and wine, their substance remaining, which Luther embraced, agreed neither with the words of our Lord, nor with the analogy of Christian faith, nor with the consent of orthodox antiquity; for he saw that it had not been said by Christ, 'Let this be or become my body,' nor even, 'Under this, or in this, my body is, or is contained.' Yet he did not see what he should safely adopt, till having weighed many similar passages of Scripture, and consulted orthodox antiquity, as Tertullian, Ambrose, Augustine, Theodoret, Bertram, and others, he at length determined, that in the words of our Lord, 'This is my body,' or, 'This bread is my body,' there is a *metonymy* peculiar to the Hebrew language, and that metonymically the name of

the thing signified is transferred to the sign; that the bread is called the body of the Lord, and the wine the blood of the New Testament, because they are symbols of the body and blood of the Lord, or because they signify the body and blood of the Lord sacramentally. Before he published this opinion, he not only communicated it to his faithful friends, but took care that it should be made known to all persons in Germany and France who were distinguished for learning and authority; for he foresaw that the opposite opinion, which for so many ages had taken deep root in the minds of men, would with great difficulty be eradicated.\* The opinion which he finally adopted was this,—“That the bread and wine were no more than a representation of the body and blood of Christ; or, in other words, the signs appointed to denote the benefits that were conferred upon mankind in consequence of the death of Christ; that, therefore, Christians derived no other fruit from the participation of the Lord's Supper, than a mere commemoration and remembrance of the merits of Christ, and that there was nothing in the ordinance but a memorial of Christ.”

That both Papists and Lutherans should have exclaimed against this simple view of the sacred institution, can excite no surprise. To some who had renounced the errors of both, he appeared to have gone to the opposite extreme. Those, therefore, who did not choose to condemn his opinion in express terms, deemed it necessary to make an apology for it. Thus Bucer, his contemporary, having remarked that in the epistles of Zuinglius concerning the sacraments, some things are found, from which it may be inferred that he did not attribute as much to the sacraments as ought to be ascribed to them, admonishes the reader, that Zuinglius did not deny that the sacraments are symbols of grace, and in their own way are auxiliary to faith; and goes on to state, that his object in speaking of them as he did, was, to guard men against putting confidence in the external work, not to evacuate the sacraments of Christ. “For he had to do with those who defended the vulgar impiety by which some men are led to seek salvation from the *opus operatum*, as they call it, that is, from the ceremony itself externally performed, being altogether careless of faith in the promises. Against these he justly contended; that Christ our Lord restores us to the favour of his Father; and not the sacraments, or the external action of the priests in the administration of the sacraments. Whatever therefore you shall read in these epistles which shall seem to detract something from the sacraments, understand all that to be said concerning the external action, to the exclusion of the Spirit of Christ.”†

It had appeared to some that Zuinglius denied the efficacy of the sacraments, and reduced them to mere signs which work solely by a moral influence; and this apology was undertaken to show that this was not his intention. To have represented them as naked signs, would no doubt have been improper; because, if they were instituted for the confirmation of our faith, they could not have accomplished this design without the communication of grace; but there seems to have been a disposition in that age, to believe, that there was a presence of Christ in the Eucharist different from his presence in the other ordinances of the gospel; an undefined something, which corresponded to the strong language used at the institution of the Supper, “This is my body,—this is my blood.” Acknowledging it to be figurative, many still thought that a mystery was couched under it. It was not, indeed, easy for those who had long been accustomed to the notion of the bodily presence of Christ, at once to simplify their ideas; and perhaps, too, they were induced to express themselves as they did, with a view to give less offence to the Lutherans. Whatever was their motive, their language is not always sufficiently guarded. Hence Bucer adds,

\* Melch. Adami Vitæ Germ. Theol. *Vita Zuinglii*, p. 39, 40.

† Buceri Epist. in Melch. Adami Vita Zuinglii, p. 41, 42.



"When it is said that Christ, having left this world and carried his body to heaven, cannot be consubstantiated with the bread, do not think that in our churches he is excluded from the sacred Supper, and that bread and wine alone are administered as empty symbols. As the passage of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven, implies only that he is not here after the manner of this world; so we do not deny that he is united to the bread, or locally included in the bread; but not naturally, and after the manner of this world. We acknowledge that the true body and the true blood of Christ, true Christ himself, God and man, is present to us in the Supper; that by the words and symbols he is exhibited not for the perishing food of the flesh, but for the eternal food of the soul, and on that account is not perceived by sense and reason, but by true faith."\*

These words are very unguarded. While they deny, they seem also to affirm, the real presence of Christ in the sacrament in some mysterious manner, and are calculated to mislead and to confound the mind. Had it been said that the bread and wine are merely signs of his body and blood, but that he is contemplated and enjoyed by the communicants in the exercises of meditation and faith, we could have understood it; but what idea can we affix to the presence of the true body and the true blood of Christ, "not naturally, and after the manner of this world?" Would not Papists and Lutherans say the same thing?

The name of Calvin ought always to be mentioned with respect. He was one of the brightest ornaments of the Reformation, and in learning, genius, and zeal, had few equals, and no superior. His opposition both to transubstantiation and to consubstantiation is well known; and yet, in speaking of the Lord's Supper, he has expressed himself in the following manner: "The sum is, that our souls are not otherwise fed with the flesh and blood of Christ, than bread and wine sustain our corporeal life. Nor would the analogy of the sign otherwise agree, unless souls found their nourishment in Christ; which cannot be, unless Christ truly coalesce with us into one, and restore us by the eating of his flesh and the drinking of his blood. But although it seems incredible that, the places being so distant, the flesh of Christ should penetrate to us so as to be our food, let us remember how much the secret power of the Spirit exceeds our senses, and how foolish it is to attempt to measure his immensity by our standard. What our mind does not comprehend, let faith conceive, that the Spirit truly unites things which are disjoined in place. That sacred communication of his flesh and blood, by which Christ transfuses his life into us, no otherwise than if he penetrated into our bones and marrow, he attests and seals in the Supper; not indeed in a vain and empty sign, but there exerting the efficacy of his Spirit, by which he fulfils what he promises."†

I confess that I do not understand this passage. It supposes a communion of believers in the human nature of our Saviour in the Eucharist; and endeavours to remove the objection arising from the distance of place, by a reference to the almighty power of the Spirit, much in the same way as Papists and Lutherans solve the difficulty attending their respective systems. If Calvin had meant only that, in the Sacred Supper, believers have fellowship with Christ in his death, he would have asserted an important truth, attested by the experience of the people of God in every age; but why did he obscure it, and destroy its simplicity, by involving it in ambiguous language? If he had any thing different in view; if he meant that there is some mysterious communication with his human nature, we must be permitted to say that the notion was as incomprehensible to himself as it is to his readers. The error into which he and others have fallen is this, that while they acknowledge the words of institution to be figurative, they speak of them occasionally in such terms as

\* Buceri Epist. ubi supra.

† Calvini Instit. lib. iv. cap. xvii. sect. 10.

import the literal sense; not attending to this obvious canon of interpretation, that, in explaining a figure, we should give the true sense in other terms, and uniformly adhere to it; and that to mix together the figure and the literal sense, sometimes bringing forward the one and sometimes the other, creates confusion in the minds of others, and, instead of illustrating the subject, involves it in obscurity.

## LECTURE XCII.

ON THE

### SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

True Nature of the Eucharist.—In what Manner Christ is Present in It.—Observations on the Time of Institution; The Symbols; The Mode of Administration.—What is Implied in Partaking of it.—Who may Partake.—Periods of Celebrating it.

WE have reviewed the opinions of different denominations of Christians concerning the Lord's Supper, and have seen that even some of those who denied the real presence, have not always expressed themselves with sufficient clearness and simplicity. The words of institution have impressed them with an idea, that, although there is no change of the elements, and the true body and blood of our Redeemer are not contained in them, yet something mysterious is implied. This charge, at least, may be fairly advanced against those whom we find, even although they profess to explain the subject, making use of figurative language. It is true that, since our Lord calls the bread and wine his body and blood, we may be said to eat his body when we eat the bread, and to drink his blood when we drink the wine; but then it should be considered, that we can only eat the one and drink the other, in the same sense in which the former is called his body, and the latter his blood, that is, figuratively. Stript of all metaphorical terms, the action must mean that, in the believing and grateful commemoration of his death, we enjoy the blessings which were purchased by it, in the same manner in which we enjoy them when we exercise faith in hearing the Gospel. Why, then, should any man talk, as Calvin does, of some inexplicable communion in this ordinance with the human nature of Christ; and tell us that, although it seems impossible, on account of the distance to which he is removed from us, we are not to measure the power of the Divine Spirit by our standard? I am sure that the person who speaks so, conveys no idea into the minds of those whom he addresses; and I am equally certain that he does not understand himself. When our Lord speaks, in the Gospel of John, of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, all Protestants will acknowledge that he simply means our reception of him and his benefits by faith. Why should it be supposed that any other thing is signified by the Lord's Supper, in which the language is virtually the same? What rule of interpretation will justify us in entertaining the idea of something more mysterious in the one case than in the other? There is an absurdity in the notion, that there is any communion with the body and blood of Christ, considered in themselves; that he intended any such thing; or that it could be of any advantage to us. There is an absurdity in imagining that, by calling the symbols



his body and blood, he meant to fix our attention upon these, materially considered; and in not acknowledging that his design was to direct our thoughts to himself, as our incarnate Redeemer, who was substituted in our room, expiated our sins, and has obtained a perfect salvation for us. The ordinance is misunderstood, when it gives rise to carnal meditations; and is then only observed aright, when our minds are employed in the spiritual contemplation of his atonement, and its effects. When our Church, therefore, says that "the body and blood are as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses,"\* and, that they "feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace,"† it can mean only, that our incarnate suffering Saviour is apprehended by their minds, through the instituted signs; and that, by faith, they enjoy peace and hope; or it means something unintelligible and unscriptural. Plain, literal language is best, especially on spiritual subjects, and should have been employed by Protestant Churches with the utmost care, as the figurative terms of Scripture have been so grossly mistaken. On this ground, I object to the following words in the Confession of Faith of the Reformed Churches of France: "We confess that, in the Holy Supper, Jesus Christ feeds and nourishes us truly with his flesh and blood, that we may be one with him, and that his life may be communicated to us. For, although he is in heaven till he come to judge the world, yet we believe that, by the secret and incomprehensible virtue of his Spirit, he nourishes and quickens us with the substance of his body and blood. We hold that this is done spiritually, not to put imaginations and thoughts in the place of the effect and the truth, but inasmuch as this mystery surmounts, by its height, the measure of our senses, and the whole order of nature."‡

It is not the design of these observations to deny, or call in question, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. I should not hesitate to affirm a real, in opposition to an imaginary, and in distinction from a symbolical, presence, had not the phrase been abused to express a doctrine inconsistent with Scripture and common sense. But the doctrine of his presence I would not found, as others do, upon the words of institution, which, when justly interpreted, merely import that the elements are signs of his body and blood. Now, a sign is very far from implying that the thing signified is present. It is rather understood to represent an absent object, and is put in its place to remind us of it, because it is removed to a distance from us. Instead of being a fair conclusion from the words of institution, that there is a peculiar, mysterious presence of our Saviour, which can be accounted for only by the miraculous power of the Spirit, it might rather be inferred that he is not present at all, and that the design of the symbols is to call him to remembrance in his absence. The doctrine of his presence in the Sacred Supper, is legitimately deduced from his general promise, which relates to all his ordinances without any special respect to the Supper: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."§ It is this promise which gives us ground to consider him as present in the Eucharist, in baptism, in prayer, in the preaching of the Gospel. In all these ordinances he is present; and he is present in the same manner in them all, namely, by his Spirit, who renders them effectual means of salvation. This sentiment would be pronounced heretical by the Church of Rome, and by the followers, of Luther; and would even incur the disapprobation of many Protestants, who have been accustomed to think that Christ is somehow in the Eucharist, as he is not in any other ordinance. But their belief and their confident affirmation are of no value, if they are not supported by Scripture. And where do they find any ground for their opinion

\* Conf. ch. xxix. § 7.

† Larger Cat. Q. 168.

‡ Art. xxxvi. Vide Quick's Synodicon, vol. i. p. 14.

§ Matth. xviii. 20.

but in human systems? It is indeed said, that "the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ, and the cup which we drink is the communion of his blood."\* No man who admits that the bread and wine are only signs and figures, can consistently suppose the words now quoted to have any other meaning, than that we have communion with Christ in the fruits of his sufferings and death; or that, receiving the symbols, we receive by faith the benefits procured by the pains of his body, and the effusion of his blood. If it should still be thought that the strong terms used by our Lord imply something peculiar to this ordinance, I would remind you that the same language is employed in reference to the Gospel; for our Saviour is speaking of it, and not of the Eucharist, when he says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."† Now, as the man who believes the Gospel, eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Christ, as well as he who partakes of the sacred Supper, it follows, that in both communion with him is of the same kind, and that there is no reason to imagine any presence of our Saviour in the Eucharist which is not in the word.

What has been now said, has no tendency to diminish our reverence for the Eucharist. It is no true respect for it, which is founded on a mistaken view of its nature. It is still a holy institution, in which believers enjoy intimate fellowship with Christ; and is guarded by an awful sanction, that none may dare to engage in the service unprepared: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."‡

I shall now proceed to give you an account of the Lord's Supper.

The occasion on which it was instituted by Christ, was the celebration of the passover with his disciples. Having sent some of them to procure a place, and to make ready all things for the feast, "when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and break it, and gave it to his disciples," &c.§ You will observe that it was during the time of the passover, while they were eating, and probably towards the end of the feast, that our Lord instituted the Eucharist. The one was not finished when the other commenced; and, by this continuity, it was intimated that the one was changed into the other, and that the latter was henceforth to supply the place of the former.

The time of the institution was the night on which he was betrayed. He was to be put to death the next day; and, in the view of that event, he appointed the Supper to be a perpetual memorial of it. The time was calculated to invest it with a particular interest, as his disciples would connect with the celebration of it the recollection of the awful scenes which immediately ensued. To his followers in every age, it is a proof of his singular love to them, that while his own dreadful sufferings were so near, he thought of them with the most tender regard, and provided for their encouragement and consolation amidst the evils of life. They are excited to remember him, by this testimony that he remembers them.

The symbols which he selected were bread and wine, of which the former represents his body, and the latter his blood. The bread and wine were such as had been placed on the table for the purpose of celebrating the passover. A dispute arose, in former times, between the Eastern and the Western Church, whether the bread should be leavened or unleavened. The Greeks maintain that it should be leavened, because our Lord, they think, ate the passover the day before it was eaten by the Jews, and consequently, before the use of unleavened bread had begun. On the other hand, the Latins affirm that he observed the passover at the usual time, and, of course, used unleavened bread, according to the law. This controversy contributed, with other causes, to the

\* 1 Cor. x. 16. † John vi. 53. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 29. § Matt. xxvi. 20, 26.



schism between the Churches, which has lasted for many centuries. It is in the highest degree insignificant, as the use of either the one kind or the other was purely accidental, and the quality of the bread has no connexion with the nature and design of the ordinance. The practice of dividing the bread into small pieces, called wafers, and putting them into the mouths of the communicants, is a corruption of the Church of Rome, which takes away the significant action of breaking the bread, and the emblem of the union and fellowship of Christians, expressed by their partaking of one bread, or one loaf, according to the words of the Apostle: "For we, being many, are one body, and one bread: for we are all partakers of that one bread."\* With respect to the wine, it has been inquired, whether it should be mingled with water, or exhibited pure? We are told that the Jews were accustomed to mix water with their wine, and that they did so particularly at the passover; and it has been inferred that our Saviour complied with the custom of his country. There is little doubt that he would do so in a matter so indifferent; but we do not know what was the custom in his days, except from Jewish tradition, on which no dependence can be placed. This practice generally obtained in Christian churches, and, as is usual, mystical reasons were assigned for it; that the wine and water signified the blood and water which flowed from our Saviour's side; that they denoted the union of his two natures in one person; and that, as nations are called waters in the visions of the Apocalypse, the mixture was expressive of the union of believers to Christ. Such fancies are childish and contemptible. As nothing is said of any mixture in the Scriptures, it is natural to conclude that the wine should be pure. It has been farther inquired, whether in cases where bread and wine cannot be procured, it would be lawful to make use of corresponding substances? To us the question is a mere speculation, on which we are not called to decide; but, as necessity supersedes positive law, it would be hard to affirm that the Lord's Supper should not be celebrated, where the identical materials could not be found which were used at the original institution.

Our Lord took the bread, and after supper the cup. This has been supposed to be a significant action, and has been explained in different ways; some making it import, that God took his own Son to be mediator between him and us, and a propitiation for our sins; and others conceiving it to mean, that Christ assumed our nature to die in it. The other actions are understood from their own nature, or from the words of Scripture; but the meaning of this action is the subject only of conjecture, and hence there are different views of its import. In other words, it is explained according to every man's fancy. As the Scripture relates the fact, but subjoins no observation upon it, we are at liberty to reject human commentaries. I am disposed to think, that the taking of the bread and wine was not a sacramental action, but merely a preliminary step to the institution. Bread and wine were upon the table for the purpose of the passover, which Jesus, as Master of the family, had already sanctified by prayer and thanksgiving. It was necessary, as he was to commence a new feast, that he should take them again and distribute them, in order to show the disciples that this was a new feast, and not a continuation of the former. The taking of the elements by the minister before prayer, appears to me to be a matter of indifference. I should not blame him who omitted, or him who observed it; but I could not go along with the latter, if he considered it as an essential part of the ordinance.

Let us now attend to the first action of our Lord, with respect to the bread and the wine, after he had taken them. Two words are employed, which signify *to bless*, and *to give thanks*. The latter alone is used in reference to the cup, but both are used in reference to the bread, and hence it appears that they

\* 1 Cor. x. 17.

have virtually the same meaning, as one writer has chosen the one, and another writer the other. We read in our translation that Jesus "blessed the bread;" and hence it has been inferred that he consecrated it, or set it apart from a common to a sacred use. The term, consecration, has found its way even into Protestant churches, in relation to the sacraments; and ministers often speak of setting apart the elements from a common to a holy use. I presume that they are consecrated or set apart, not by the actions of men, but by the institution of Christ, or become sacred by being devoted to a sacred use. Be this as it may, the inference from the words of Scripture is groundless; because the original says simply, that our Saviour "blessed," not that he blessed the bread, for the pronoun *it* is a supplement. The meaning is, that he blessed God, as the substitution of the word, *to give thanks*,\* by some of the Evangelists, plainly shows. He blessed, or gave thanks to his Father, we may presume, for his love in sending him into the world to save our fallen race, by his obedience unto death. It may be questionable whether we should venture to imitate him in the consecration of the elements, the right to do which seems to be exclusively vested in him, as the Head of the church, to whom it belongs to separate persons and things to the service of God; but there can be no doubt, that it is our duty to imitate him in his thanksgiving. We should never reflect upon his death without emotions of gratitude; and these should be particularly strong when the memorial of it is before our eyes, and we are assembled to receive a token of our interest in his atonement, and of our title to the precious blessings which it has procured. There is no occasion on which the words of the Psalmist may be adopted with greater propriety, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

Having blessed or given thanks, he constituted the bread and wine signs of his body and blood. This is the proper place to take notice of this important fact, although the elements were made significant in the act of giving them to the disciples. He said of the bread, "This is my body;" and of the wine, "This is my blood." Thus, what is called a sacramental union was established; by which nothing more is meant, than that the elements become signs or figures of his body and blood, and bear the names of the things which they represent. I have already shown you that the notion of some mystical union, which cannot be explained or understood, is unscriptural and superstitious. The relation of the symbols to the realities is the same as was the relation of the paschal lamb to our Redeemer, or as is the relation of the water in baptism to the influences of the Spirit. In all these cases, something distant and invisible is represented by another thing which is placed within the range of our senses. It does not belong to man to appoint signs of Christ's body and blood. This has been already done by his institution, and bread and wine become such signs to us, when, with prayer to God, we set them apart for this purpose. The muttering of the words of institution over the elements, to consecrate them, or transubstantiate them, more resembles, as we have said, a charm than an act of religious worship, and falsely supposes that this makes the sacrament, while it is made by the appointment of Christ.

Jesus brake the bread. It has been inquired, whether this circumstance is essential to the ordinance, or may be omitted; as it is in the Church of Rome, where the bread is exhibited in small separate pieces, called wafers, one of which is put into the mouth of each communicant. We have no hesitation in saying that it is essential; that, when it is wanting, the sacrament is not celebrated according to the original institution; and that all the reasons which require other parts of the ordinance to be retained, may be alleged with equal justice for the retention of this. It is, indeed, so essential, that the Lord's Supper is sometimes designated from it alone, and is called "the breaking of bread." The

\* Mark xvi. 23. Luke xxii. 19.



rite is significant, and is appropriate to the design of the institution, which is to commemorate our Saviour's death. He himself explained it, when he said, "This is my body which is broken for you," intimating that the broken bread is a figure of his body as wounded and lacerated for our salvation. But of this important fact there is no representation, when a small morsel of bread, in its entire form, is distributed to the communicants. We are reminded by the breaking of the bread, of the severe suffering which our Lord endured, when his back was torn with a scourge, his hands and feet were pierced with nails, and his head was crowned with thorns; and our minds are naturally led to contemplate the sorrows of his soul, which had almost overwhelmed him,—sorrows which no man can comprehend, but which undoubtedly arose from a sense of Divine wrath, on account of the sins of his people which he had undertaken to expiate. I may remark, before leaving this particular, that as, in this ordinance, Christ is represented as dead for our salvation, not only is the bread broken, but the sign of his blood is separately exhibited, with an obvious intention to signify that he died by the effusion of his blood, or by its separation from his body. It is the practice in some of the Eastern churches to give the bread dipped in wine. But, as this is an unauthorized innovation, so it quite subverts the design of the ordinance, so far as it is figurative; because it exhibits his blood as remaining in his body, or conjoined with it, instead of representing it as shed, according to the express words of our Lord: "This is my blood which is shed for the remission of sins."

Lastly, Our Saviour gave the bread and the cup to his disciples. I formerly showed you, that the seals of covenants are intended to be used in different ways; to be looked at, as the rainbow in the clouds; to be applied externally to the body, as water in baptism; to be taken for food, as the bread and wine in the Eucharist. With regard to a seal of the last description, it was evidently necessary that it should be put into our hands, to denote the divine grant of it, and our right to make use of it. By giving the bread and wine to the disciples, we may conceive our Lord to have signified,—and the rite is still of the same import,—that he and his Father freely and irrevocably give the blessings of redemption to believers. His atonement, with all its precious fruits, is as truly theirs, as the bread and wine which have been put into their hands. The Eucharist is therefore with propriety denominated a seal, the purpose of which is to authenticate a deed. Christ gives to worthy communicants, not his real body and blood, from which they could derive no advantage, but the invaluable benefits which were purchased by the sufferings of his body and the effusion of his blood; and by the external action ratifies the gift.

Let us next attend to the actions of the disciples. The design of the Lord's Supper being to confirm the covenant of God with his people, it was necessary, on the one hand, that the ordinance should be instituted by our Saviour, and on the other, that something should be done by us to signify our consent to the covenant. With this view, we are commanded to take the bread and eat it, and to take the cup and drink it. This is all that is enjoined upon the communicants. Various observances are prescribed by the Church of Rome, which being inventions of her own are unworthy of notice; and in the Church of England, the communicants are required to receive the sacrament kneeling. It is a vestige of Popery, which it is a dishonour to a Protestant church to retain. We can understand the reason why a Papist kneels, for he believes that what he sees is the real body of Christ, which he is bound to adore; but we may be justly surprised to find a person of a different faith complying with the usage, when the reason of it is gone. He symbolizes with idolaters; and if a silly love of pomp and form, and an unscriptural reverence for antiquity, had not prevailed at the Reformation in England, this and other superstitious practices would have been swept as rubbish out of the temple of

God. It might move our indignation to hear that church requiring kneeling from greater respect for the sacrament, although till lately she was accustomed to profane it in the grossest manner, by administering it to the most notorious profligates, as a qualification for office. Kneeling is a manifest deviation from the original institution. The disciples celebrated the supper in the posture which they observed at their ordinary meals. They were reclining upon couches, according to the custom of their country; and we imitate their example when we sit at the Lord's table, as we do at our own tables.

In the early periods of society, when language is not copious, men express their sentiments by actions as well as by words. This mode was adopted by the prophets, who sometimes accompanied their revelations with significant signs. It is retained in symbolical ordinances, and some traces of it are seen in the daily intercourse of life. When a proposal is made by one man to another, or a question is asked, which requires an answer in the affirmative, he is understood to consent to the proposal, or to answer the question, by bowing his head, without uttering a syllable. Our silent actions at the table of the Lord are a declaration of our sentiments, as distinct and intelligible as if we had clothed them in words. The crucified Saviour is presented to us under the figures of bread and wine; and by taking and using these we plainly signify, that we cordially receive him as our Saviour. God gives us sensible signs, to assure us that his covenant is immutable, and his promises shall be performed; and we, by accepting the signs, express our confidence in his faithfulness, and our certain expectation of the blessings which he has engaged to bestow. Hence we perceive the import of the words of the Apostle, which have been repeatedly quoted: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"\* They signify that believers enjoy fellowship with their Saviour in the holy supper. His death is exhibited as the meritorious cause of their reconciliation to God; and it is exhibited in so impressive a manner, as to strengthen their faith, and to fill them with joy and peace in believing. But this is the privilege of those alone who are possessed of the faith of which the actions performed by them are expressive. When it is wanting, the actions are hypocritical; the symbols are received, but the Saviour is rejected; and the unworthy communicant is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; that is, the irreverence with which he uses the symbols terminates upon him whom they represent, and he, as it were, crucifies the Son of God afresh, and puts him to open shame.

From this view of the actions enjoined upon Christians in the celebration of the Eucharist, it appears, that it is intended to be a public declaration of our faith in Christ. When he instituted the ordinance, he said, "Do this in remembrance of me." It is a memorial of his death, which serves not only to perpetuate the knowledge of that event, but to signify in what esteem it is held, and what importance is attached to it by his followers. It is commemorated not merely as the death of a friend and benefactor, of a teacher distinguished by his wisdom, or of a saint illustrious for his virtues; but of a Redeemer who laid down his life as a ransom for our souls. Every man who partakes of the sacred symbols is understood to declare, whatever may be his secret sentiments, that he acknowledges Jesus Christ in the character of his Saviour, and founds his hope of salvation upon his sacrifice. He presents to God the death of his Son, as his only plea for his favour; and avows to the world, that however lightly they may esteem the salvation of Christ, he prefers it to every sublunary enjoyment.

Again, in the Lord's Supper we enter into a solemn engagement to serve him, who loved us, and gave himself for us. I formerly remarked, that it is

\* 1 Cor. x. 16.



commonly supposed to have been called a sacrament, in allusion to the military oath of the Romans to be obedient to their general. I assigned my reason for thinking that this is a mistake; and that the word, sacrament, was used as equivalent to mystery. Be this however as it may, the celebrated passage in the epistle of the younger Pliny to Trajan, which represents the primitive Christians as binding themselves by an oath not to commit murder, theft, adultery, or any other crime, and which I have no doubt refers to the Lord's supper, points out the view which was then entertained of that ordinance. While it was a commemoration of the death of Christ, it was understood to be an engagement to duty. It is an acknowledgment that we are not our own, but are bought with a price, and that we are therefore bound to glorify our Saviour, with our bodies and our spirits which are his. And as there is no communion between light and darkness, those are guilty of the vilest hypocrisy, and of a daring profanation of the ordinance, who observe it while they are living in known and deliberate sin, and are resolved to continue any practice which is forbidden by the law of Christ, or to omit any duty which it enjoins.

Once more, the celebration of the Eucharist is an expressive sign of the communion of Christians with one another in love; for they meet at the table of the Lord as brethren and children of the same family, to partake of the same spiritual feast. The Apostle authorizes this view of the subject by the words formerly quoted. "For we being many, are one body, and one bread," or one loaf, "for we are all partakers of that one loaf."\* It seems to have been the custom to provide a loaf of bread, which was broken, and distributed to the communicants; and the Apostle observes, that they were one like the loaf of which they all shared; their participation of it being a symbol of their union to one another, as well as to Christ, the head of his mystical body. In testimony of their mutual love, the primitive Christians were wont, at least in the second century, before they proceeded to celebrate the Eucharist, to give each other the kiss of charity; and immediately after, as we likewise learn from Justin Martyr, "they contributed according to their ability and inclination; and what was collected was delivered to the bishop or president of the assembly, who relieved with it widows and orphans, the sick, and those who were in want from any other cause, prisoners, travellers, and strangers, and in a word, all that had need."† Paul exhorts the Corinthians to "keep the feast, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness;"‡ intimating that envy, resentment, hatred, and revenge, which so ill accord with the Christian character at any time, are particularly incongruous on this occasion, when no affection towards our brethren should be entertained but the purest charity. There are several considerations, which will naturally occur, and are calculated to draw Christians together in the strictest bonds of friendship. Their character is the same, for they are all professed disciples of one Master; their privileges are the same, for they are admitted to the same holy communion with him; they are all, if they are genuine believers, equally dear to the Saviour; and they have the hope of meeting in their Father's house, and spending eternity in the most delightful intercourse.

Our Lord has shown for whose use this ordinance is intended, by administering it to his disciples; and a conclusion may be deduced from the passover, to which the Israelites alone had access, and those who had joined themselves to them by submitting to circumcision. "This is the ordinance of the passover; There shall no stranger eat thereof. And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof."§ Since circumcision was an indispensable qualification for eating the passover, it follows that

\* 1 Cor. x. 17. † Just. Mart. Apol. 2. ‡ 1 Cor. v. 8. § Exod. xii. 43, 48.

baptism, which has succeeded to it, is requisite to entitle a person to a seat at the table of the Lord. I do not know that this was ever called in question till lately, that a controversy has arisen among the English Baptists, whether persons of other Christian denominations may not be occasionally admitted to the holy communion with them; and it became necessary for those who adopted the affirmative, to maintain that baptism is not a previous condition. This assertion arose out of their peculiar system, which denies the validity of infant baptism. But to every man who contents himself with a plain view of the subject, and has no purpose to serve by subtleties and refinements, it will appear that baptism is as much the initiating ordinance of the Christian, as circumcision was of the Jewish dispensation. An uncircumcised man was not permitted to eat the passover, and an unbaptised man should not be permitted to partake of the Eucharist.

But baptism is not the only qualification. We learn from the law of Moses, that when any of the Israelites had contracted ceremonial uncleanness, they were not allowed to join with their brethren in the paschal solemnity; and for their accommodation, a second passover was appointed at the distance of a month, during which they would be purified.\* Every person who has been baptized does not possess the moral qualifications which would entitle him to be accounted a disciple of Christ. He may be an open apostate from the faith; or he may be so ignorant of religion, and so irregular in his conduct, that it would be an abuse of charity to consider him as a Christian. Hence we demand, in candidates for the Lord's table, a competent measure of knowledge, a profession of faith in Christ, and a behaviour which will justify us in believing them to be sincere. "All ignorant and ungodly persons," says our Church, "as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table, and cannot without great sin against Christ while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto."†

Hitherto I have spoken of those who have a right of admission in the judgment of the Church. But its judgment is fallible, as the state of the heart cannot be certainly known, and it rests solely upon external evidence. If it be inquired, Who have a right before God? we must answer, that believers are the only persons; and for this obvious reason, that the Eucharist is a seal of the covenant of grace, an interest in which is obtained by faith. But even believers are not always prepared to engage in this spiritual service. If their faith has declined; if their consciences are wounded by sin; if they have incurred the displeasure of God; they are not worthy to appear before him, nor capable of the holy exercises which the ordinance calls for, till they are renewed by repentance.

The reason why the exhortation of Paul to the Corinthians, "Let a man examine himself," is still brought forward by the ministers of religion, is the mixed nature of the societies over which they preside, and the imperfect state even of genuine Christians. An investigation of their character by the light of Scripture, may discover to some an unworthiness which they did not suspect, and to others a fitness of which they were in doubt. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that self-examination must precede the participation of the Lord's Supper, in the case of every man upon every occasion. There can be no reason for instituting an inquiry respecting a point which is fully ascertained. He who possesses the assurance of faith, and walks in the light of God's countenance; he who loves the law of God, and whose conscience bears testimony to his sincerity, knows his right, and may exercise it when he has an opportunity. The exhortation of Paul primarily respected a society of professed Christians, among whom great irregularities prevailed, and to whom a

\* Numb. ix. 6—12.

† Conf. xxix. § 8.



call to sit in judgment upon themselves was seasonably and properly addressed.

To assist Christians in this inquiry, is the design of that part of the service in our Church which is commonly called Fencing the Tables. You will remember, however, that it is merely an expedient suggested by human prudence, and that it is not supported by scriptural precept, or apostolical example. It is therefore a vulgar prejudice to account it essential to the ordinance, and to imagine that it adds any thing to its perfection or solemnity. The truth is, that to aid his people in examining themselves, should be the object of a minister from the beginning to the end of the year; and that he should study so to divide the word of truth, that all may be furnished with the means of ascertaining their state and character before they assemble to celebrate the Supper. But although this part of the service is not necessary, is not adopted in many Christian societies, and might be laid aside without in any degree impairing the original institution, at which it was not observed; yet there is no doubt that it has been productive of good, and might have produced more, if it had been judiciously conducted. Ministers should beware of the two extremes, of being too easy or too severe; of being too easy, lest they embolden the profane; and of being too severe, lest they discourage the pious. There is danger to be apprehended from their boundless charity, and from their gloominess and narrow-mindedness. The word of God is the only standard of character; and as it excludes all who are living in sin, so it invites all who love the Saviour, although their love should be as a grain of mustard-seed. The plan at present pursued in our Church is preferable to that of our predecessors, who, taking the decalogue as their standard, excommunicated sinners of every description and degree, many of whom were known not to be present, and would have disclaimed the privilege which was publicly denied to them. What had they to do to judge those who were without; ought they not to have judged those alone who were within?\*

How often the Lord's Supper should be celebrated, is a question which has undergone much discussion. Some contend that it should be administered every Sabbath; but in my opinion, the proof from Scripture completely fails. Nothing can be inferred from the words of Luke concerning the primitive disciples, that "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers,"† unless it should be said, that they ate the Lord's Supper as often as they prayed, which no man in his senses ever affirmed. The case of the disciples at Troas is as little to the purpose; for when we read, that "on the first day of the week, when they came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them,"‡ it would be a strange fancy to suppose, that to break bread was the uniform design of their meetings on the Sabbath. We should thus suppose, contrary to Scripture, and to the history of the primitive church, that this was the main object of all their religious assemblies, that for which their meetings were held, and to which the preaching of the gospel was secondary and subservient; whereas the narrative plainly imports that it was an occasional design, suggested by the incidental presence of the Apostle. From the words of Paul to the Corinthians, "ye come together not for the better, but for the worse," compared with what he afterwards says, "when ye come together, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper,"§ it has been concluded, that always when they came together they observed this ordinance; because, otherwise, there could be no force in the argument, that they came together for the worse, which refers to the disorders of which they were guilty in communicating. This is truly wonderful logic, which the initiated may understand, but to every other person it is unintelligible. All that the Apostle affirms is, that when the Corinthians celebrated the Lord's Supper in a riotous manner, they came together for the worse. He says not one word about the

\* 1 Cor. v. 12.

† Acts ii. 42.

‡ Ib. xx. 7.

§ 1 Cor. xi. 17. 20.

frequency or the rareness of their meetings. The stupidity of this criticism is almost equalled by that which is founded on the words, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup," and represents our Lord as enjoining a frequent celebration of the Supper; whereas every person knows that we use the phrase, as often, in reference to an action which we perform only once a year, as well as to an action which we perform once a day. *As often* as I take a meal, I ask the Divine blessing upon it. This happens three or four times a day. *As often* as I go to Edinburgh, I go by a particular road. This happens once or twice a year. Both expressions are equally proper, and imply only, that when the one thing takes place, the other always accompanies it.

Were we to judge of the Eucharist by human commemorative institutions, we should suppose it to return at distant intervals; or, were we to judge of it by similar institutions of Divine appointment, as the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, we should conclude that it was to be observed once a year. There is no precept of Scripture, no apostolical example, to regulate our practice. Churches are left at liberty to order their procedure according to their own views of expedience and utility. The sacred feast should not be treated as if it were of no value, and so rarely celebrated as to be almost forgotten; nor should it be magnified above other ordinances, and represented as of indispensable necessity on every occasion. And it is arrogance in any denomination of Christians to imagine that they excel other Christians, merely because this ordinance is more frequently dispensed among them.

## LECTURE XCIII.

### ON PRAYER.

**Prayer Natural to Man.**—Definition of Prayer; Comprehensive of Adoration, Thanksgiving, Confession, and Petition.—Object of Prayer, God.—Connexion Between the Character of God and the Duty of Prayer.—Addressed to God the Father.—Notice of Objections to Prayer.—The Word of God, the Rule of Prayer.—Blessings to be implored.

In the Gospel, Jesus Christ addresses us in the name of his Father, declaring his gracious counsels, and presenting to us the blessings of salvation, accompanied with an invitation and command to receive them. In the sacraments, the same subjects are exhibited by symbols; and as they are signs of redemption, so they are seals for the confirmation of the promises, that the faith of true Christians may be strengthened, and they may abound in consolation and hope. This external dispensation of religion requires, on their part, certain sentiments and affections of the mind, corresponding to the nature of the truths proclaimed, and the facts brought under their view; and certain actions significant of their internal emotions, and of their consent to the covenant into which God has admitted them. But the whole of religion is not comprehended in the manifestations of his good-will towards them, and the silent expressions of their faith; as he speaks to them, it is their duty to speak to him in the humble and animated language of devotion. Nor does their duty consist solely in accepting the gifts which he is pleased to bestow; they are enjoined not to wait supinely for the visitations of his favour, but to solicit them, and to present their requests in every season of need.



Man is so constituted, that the movements of his mind give an impulse to his body, and discover themselves by external signs. The contemplation of high degrees of excellence, the reception of valuable benefits, the apprehension of change, and the feeling of distress, give rise to involuntary exclamations, to gestures, and to modifications of the features. Thus a foundation is laid in human nature for the outward signs of devotion, whether they consist in words or in postures of the body. When the Scripture commands us to bow down and kneel before God, and to "lift our eyes and our hands" to his oracle, to "make known our requests" to him in words, and "to call upon his name," "to cry with a loud voice," and "to praise him in songs," it merely calls upon us, in our intercourse with him, to give scope to propensities or tendencies of our nature, which are called forth on other occasions, when our sentiments and feelings are powerfully excited. Religion does not consist solely in silent meditation. It demands the service of the whole man; and there are moments when the tongue must be employed to give utterance to the varied affections of the heart.

The subject to which I purpose now to direct your attention is Prayer. It may be strictly defined to be the supplicatory address of a creature to his Creator, in which he humbly entreats him to confer some blessing, to remove some present evil, or to defend him from future danger, which he has reason to fear. It is usually understood, however, with greater latitude; and comprehends, according to the definition of our Church, petition, confession, and thanksgiving, to which may be added adoration.\*

Adoration is the devout celebration of the perfections of God, and of his works, in which they are displayed. It is incumbent upon us to admire the transcendent excellence of his character, to acknowledge him as the first and the greatest of all beings, and to record to his honour the wonderful manifestations of himself which he has made in creation, providence, and redemption. The Scriptures are full of examples which it would be endless to cite: "O Lord my God, thou art very great: thou art clothed with honour and majesty; who coverest thyself with light as with a garment; who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain."† We, indeed, can add nothing to his glory and felicity, nor, in our highest elevation, can we think of him in a manner at all worthy of his greatness; but sentiments of reverence and admiration necessarily arise in the mind which contemplates him, and adoration is the tribute which we owe to the Author of our existence, who has revealed himself to our eyes. This act of devotion is expressed by praising and blessing God. We bless him, or pronounce him to be blessed, in whom there is an assemblage of every thing great, and good, and lovely, and who, independent of his creatures, possesses all his resources in himself; and we praise him as the model of perfection, the eternal source of life, and beauty, and felicity, the incomparable One, before whom the universe is less than nothing, and vanity: "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Thanksgiving is the expression of our gratitude for the favours which we have received from him. They are bestowed without the expectation of a recompense; and, indeed, as he stands in need of nothing, so we have nothing to give; but nature itself dictates, and religion demands, that we should entertain a lively sense of his goodness, and should give utterance to our feelings on appropriate occasions. Devout men of former times have set us an example: "Bless the Lord, O my soul," says the Psalmist, "and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."‡ Thanksgiving is naturally associated with petitions;

\* Larger Cat. Q. 178. Shorter Cat. Q. 98.

† Ps. civ. 1, 2.

‡ Ps. ciii. 1—4.

for it is impossible, when we present ourselves before a benefactor to solicit him to befriend us again, not to recall former tokens of his kindness; and we shall have the surer hope of success in our new application, when we show that we have been duly impressed by the past. We find the Apostle Paul repeatedly mingling thanksgivings with his prayers.

Confession is the acknowledgment of our sins to God, whom we have offended. It is the natural expression of genuine repentance, which so affects us with a sense of our baseness and demerit, that we cannot refrain from accusing and condemning ourselves. With many of our sins, our fellow-men have nothing to do; and if they are secret, we are under no obligation to publish them. They have no right to call us to account, and no power to pardon us. God knows them all; and we confess them to him, not to give him information, but to own our guilt, to abase ourselves in his presence, to glorify his holiness and justice, and to signify that we are worthy of punishment, and hope to be forgiven and restored to favour only through his mercy. Of this description was the prayer of David: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."\* The prayer of the Pharisee was rejected, because it consisted of thanksgiving alone; the formal, hypocritical thanksgiving of a man who gloried in his fancied superiority to others, but for the sake of decorum paid a passing compliment to God for having helped him to attain this pre-eminence: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are."†

Petition is the request of some favours from God. I have already observed that prayer, in the proper sense of the word, consists in petition alone. We ask blessings from God, because he is the sole fountain of good; and we ask blessings of every kind, because they are all at his disposal. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."‡ Our state of constant dependence and constant want, renders it necessary that we should be always presenting petitions. We have no permanent source of supply at our command, and even what we possess we cannot call our own. He who has received grace, should pray that it may be continued and increased; he who possesses a competent portion of this world's goods, should still pray for his daily bread, because, without the Divine blessing, his riches will make to themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle towards heaven; his food will not nourish, and his garments will not warm him.

Prayer should be addressed to God alone: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."§ Nothing can be more explicit than this declaration, which should have precluded, among those who acknowledge the Divine authority of the Scriptures, all deviations from the path of duty so clearly marked out in them. It is sufficient to justify us in rejecting the worship which is given in the Church of Rome to saints and angels, and in pronouncing it to be idolatrous. As the statute is express, so the reasons on which it is founded are obvious.

First, God alone can hear all our requests. He is present with us wherever we are, and not only listens to our words, but understands our thoughts and the desires of our hearts. In vain should we address ourselves to a being, with respect to whom we were in doubt whether our voice could reach him, and he were able to look beyond the exterior, and to judge of our sincerity. This consideration alone demonstrates the folly, as well as the impiety, of addressing prayers to creatures. High as is the rank of glorified spirits, and great as is

\* Ps. li. 1, 3, 4.

† Luke xviii. 11.

‡ James i. 17.

§ Matth. iv. 10.



the enlargement of their powers, we have no authentic information that they are acquainted with the affairs of men upon the earth. It is not improbable that, except so far as God may be pleased to make discoveries to them for particular purposes, they are ignorant of our affairs; and to suppose them to know all things, and especially to know the heart, would be to suppose them to be gods. The ironical words of Elijah to the priests of Baal, may be addressed with the utmost propriety to the man who prays to a saint: "Cry aloud, for either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."\* But all things are "naked and manifest to him with whom we have to do;" and we pray to him, because we are assured that his ear is always open to our cry. Besides the simple knowledge of our requests, his unerring wisdom can decide upon every case which comes under his notice. None of those mistakes will happen, which result from the short-sighted benevolence of human benefactors; he perceives what will be for our good, and what would be prejudicial to us, and we may implicitly resign ourselves to his disposal.

Secondly, God alone can grant our requests. There is nothing at the absolute disposal of creatures. As there are many things which they cannot do at all, so those things which are understood to lie within the sphere of their ability, they can do only when God permits, and assists them by his providence or grace. Why then should we apply to saints, or even to angels, who are dependent as well as we, and, although superior to us, are subject to similar restraints? An angel could not deliver us from death, for he does not hold the keys of the grave and the invisible world; an angel could not pardon our sins, for he is not the Supreme Lawgiver, and the dispenser of mercy. A saint, a glorified saint, has no grace to communicate to us, for he has not more than he needs for himself; he could not, by his own power, relieve us for a single moment from pain, or procure for us a draught of water in the parched and thirsty wilderness. To the worshippers of such beings we may apply the words of the prophet, "They have no knowledge that pray unto a god that cannot save;"† and we may add, that they would not save although they could, for the blessed inhabitants of heaven are too zealous for the Divine glory, to appropriate any part of it to themselves, or to sympathize with the impious men who attempt to raise them to an equal rank with the Most High. To him the earth belongs, and the fulness thereof; the heaven also is his, with all its treasures, and what good thing can his creatures ask which he is not able to bestow? "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."‡ We come, in prayer, to a fountain which is pouring out a copious and overflowing stream of blessings, and yet is always full. As withholding doth not enrich, so giving doth not impoverish him; and we have no reason, therefore, to fear lest our frequent demands should exhaust his beneficence, or our importunity, should displease him. The benevolence of creatures may be restrained by the apprehension that, by giving much to others, they shall not have enough for themselves; but God is all sufficient, and his favour is never solicited in vain.

This leads me to remark, in the third place, that God is willing to grant our requests. Prayer proceeds upon the idea of the benevolence of his nature. Were we to conceive of him as a malevolent or a selfish Being; were we to imagine even that he is indifferent, or that he would deem it beneath his dignity to take notice of such insignificant creatures and their petty affairs, there would be no inducement to present our petitions to him, and our labour would be bestowed in vain. On such views of the Deity, the Epicureans pronounced all religion to be vain; and some modern philosophers place him at such a distance from men, that every tie which seemed to unite them is broken; and shut

\* 1 Kings xviii. 27.

† Isa. xlv. 20.

‡ Phil. iv. 19.

up in the mysteriousness of his essence, he is only an object of uninteresting speculation. The Divine Being is communicative, not however necessarily, as the sun gives out his rays, or the fountain its streams, for then the universe should have existed from eternity, and all its inhabitants would be happy, and happy in the highest degree. But there is a principle in God which disposes him to diffuse felicity, according to the dictates of his wisdom, and in accordance with his other perfections; and in this principle originated the creation of heaven and earth, and the dispensations of providence and grace. It is the knowledge of this feature in the Divine character, which encourages us to present our supplications. He is good, and does good, and for this reason we pray to him. And surely, when we reflect upon the infinite fulness of God, to which the goodness of the most perfect creature bears a less proportion than a drop bears to all the waters on the surface and in the bowels of the globe; and upon his willingness to exercise it, which the Scriptures labour to express by the selection of a variety of terms, calling it his love, grace, mercy, good pleasure, and compassion; we may say of those who address their prayers to the angels or the saints, in the words of God concerning the Israelites, who transferred their homage from him to the gods of the surrounding nations, "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."\*

It were easy to show that all the other parts of prayer, when taken in its most extensive sense, are founded on the character and perfections of God; adoration on his transcendent excellence and unrivalled greatness; thanksgiving on the numerous and valuable benefits which he confers; confession on the relation in which he stands to us, as our offended Maker and Judge. But I have confined myself to prayer, properly so called, or petition; and in this light it will be viewed, in what I have farther to say upon the subject.

The reasons which have been now stated, hold out encouragement to pray, and prove that our prayers should be addressed to God alone. But in consequence of the situation in which we are placed as sinful creatures, something further is necessary to be known with respect to the object of worship. The conclusions which innocent beings may legitimately deduce from his character, are not applicable to the case of the guilty; who, if they reasoned justly, would infer that from his goodness they have nothing to expect, and that his perfect knowledge supplies the evidence on which his power will be justly exerted in subjecting them to punishment. The criminal may venture to solicit the favour of his judge; but what would be the foundation of his hope, if there were no indication that he is mercifully disposed?

The prayers which sinners offer up to God are founded, or should be founded, on the dispensation of grace. The important question whether God is placable, upon which the religion of the guilty depends, is answered by the gospel, which declares that he is not only willing to be appeased, but that he is actually reconciled to us by the atonement of his Son. The obstacle to the reception of fallen men, and the communication of blessings to them, is removed. The demands of justice have been satisfied; the law which they had broken, has been honoured by the fulfilment of its precepts, and the establishment of its authority; and consistently with the holiness and righteousness of his character and administration, God may extend his favour to those who in themselves deserved condemnation and wrath. Spiritual and heavenly blessings have been obtained for them, and exhibited in the promises; and these are ratified with the blood of our Saviour. Hence you perceive, that all our prayers should have a respect to his mediation. God should be contemplated as manifested in him, and the displays of his perfections in creation and provi-

\* Jer. ii. 13.



dence can give encouragement to us, only when they are viewed in connexion with the work of redemption, in which they assume an aspect of benevolence to man, and are engaged, if I may speak so, to co-operate for our good. The Maker of heaven and earth will appear to the person who is apprised of his natural condition, to be an object of confidence and hope, only when he is considered at the same time as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him the Father of mercies, and the God of all grace and consolation. The mediation of Christ furnishes the sole ground on which we can expect success; it supplies the arguments with which we should enforce our petitions; and when we do receive a favourable answer, it is granted in consideration, not of our sincerity and fervour, but of his merit and intercession. Hence you perceive for what reason our Saviour has commanded us to ask all things in his name, and also when we do comply with this injunction. The mere mention of his name is not sufficient; for it is introduced into many a prayer, which breathes a spirit the most adverse to the Gospel, into the prayers of the self-righteous, who trust much more to themselves than to him. They alone pray in his name, who, fully convinced of their own unworthiness, depend on him alone for acceptance. "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."\* There is then an essential difference between the prayers of a Christian, and those of the professor of any other religion. The latter addresses God as the Creator; but the former as the Redeemer of the human race. Both may appeal to the divine mercy; but the one contemplates it under the vague and general notion of benevolence awakened by the spectacle of misery, leaving the idea of justice or moral rectitude out of sight; while the other fixes his attention upon the specific manifestation of it in harmony with all the attributes of the Deity. The Christian approaches God by an intercessor, whose merits will secure the acceptance of his requests; but the Mahometan and the philosopher appears for himself, and trusts that the naked representation of his case will prevail upon the Almighty to regard him with a propitious eye. We are not left in doubt which of these modes of prayer is pleasing to God, and will draw down his blessing upon us. "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me."†

As God is revealed to us in a plurality of persons, when we say that he is the object of prayer, we must be understood to mean, that prayer should be addressed to each of those persons. A title to religious worship is not peculiar to any of them, but is common to them all. There is the same ground of honour in each, namely, the possession of the divine essence and perfections. The Father is the first in order; but we must not add with some, in dignity also, lest we destroy the equality and undeify the other persons of the Trinity. There is no perfection in the Father, which is not also in the Son and in the Holy Ghost. Examples of religious worship addressed to them as well as to the Father occur in the Scriptures, which are the standard of our faith and practice. In his last moments, the blessed martyr Stephen prayed to Jesus Christ, whom he saw standing at the right hand of God: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."‡ Equal honour is given to the Holy Ghost. He is understood to be signified by the seven Spirits before the throne, to whom John prayed for grace to the churches,§ as well as the eternal Father, and his Son the only-begotten from the dead, and we continue to pray to him in our public assemblies, when in the language of an Apostle, we say, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you. Amen."|| Thus we have a full warrant to call upon any of the sacred persons of the Godhead. They are all present to hear and to help us;

\* Phil. iii. 3.

§ Rev. i. 4.

† John xiv. 6.

‡ 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

‡ Acts vii. 59.

and the part which each sustains in the economy of redemption, holds out the highest encouragement to make known our requests to him. We may with all confidence draw near to the Father who loved us, to the Son who died for us, and to the Spirit who sanctifies and comforts us.

But the ordinary mode of worship, which is established by the Christian dispensation, is to address the Father, in the name of the Son, and by the assistance of the Holy Ghost: and it is pointed out by the Apostle in the following words. "Through him," that is, Christ, "we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."\* To the Father a place of eminence and dignity is assigned in redemption. He is, if I may express myself so, the representative of the Godhead, who asserts its rights, and demands satisfaction to its justice; and hence, although all the persons were equally dishonoured by the sins of men, and the scheme of salvation originated in their common consent, it was his anger which the sacrifice of the cross was offered to avert, and it is his favour which we are directed to implore. The love of the divine nature is manifested and exercised towards us in the person of the Father. On this account, although not to the exclusion of the other persons,—who, as we have seen, may be directly addressed,—he is the object of those devotional duties, in which the feelings excited in our souls by the contemplation and experience of divine goodness are expressed. In him the infinite glory, the unbounded perfection, the transcendent benevolence of the Godhead, are manifested; and we look to him as our refuge, and our strength, and our present help in trouble. Through Christ we believe in God, who raised him from the dead. Christ was constituted the way, the truth, and the life, that we might come to the Father; his blood was shed that we might have boldness to enter into the holiest of all. Since then it appears from the New Testament, and from the remarks which have been made, that the Father is the ordinary object of Christian worship, it will be proper to inquire distinctly in what light he should be viewed when we pray to him.

First, We must beware of considering him as alone, or as exclusively entitled to our worship, and should remember that the pre-eminence which is implied in his being the peculiar object of our prayers, is merely economical. Even when we address the Father, we do not give honour to him alone. As the Divine nature which is in him is also in the Son and the Spirit, in worshipping him we worship the whole Trinity. We worship God, and each of these persons is God. In consequence of the essential union, although one of the persons may be immediately in the contemplation of the mind, we cannot divide the honour so as to withhold it from another; and, besides, as the Father is the representative of the Godhead, the glory which terminates in the first instance upon him, redounds to the Son and the Spirit. We honour them in the Father, with whom they are one. This reasoning is justified by our Lord's express declaration: "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."†

Secondly, It is evident from what has been already said, that we must consider him as reconciled. In this light the gospel reveals him as the object of prayer. The majesty, and power, and moral purity of the mysterious Being who presides over nature and pervades all space, are calculated to overwhelm us with awe and terror; but the mild glory of mercy shining in the face of Jesus Christ, revives and comforts the amazed and trembling soul. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

Lastly, We should consider him as our Father; and in this relation believers are authorized to claim him, in consequence of his relation to their Saviour. "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."‡ When our Lord taught his disciples to pray, he directed them to begin with saying, "Our Father which art in heaven." This character, which he has conde-

\* Eph. ii. 18.

† John xiv. 9.

‡ Ib. xx. 17.



scended to assume, reminds us of the temper of mind with which we should approach the throne of heaven; not as slaves, who are afraid to utter their requests before a haughty and unfeeling master; nor as criminals, trembling in the presence of a judge who has their life at his disposal; but as children confident of the affection of their parent, with the language of faith in our mouths, and the expectation of grace in our hearts. The name of Father awakens every pleasing emotion. Will he not lend an ear to our requests, although presented with much unworthiness? Will not his compassion prompt him to relieve our distress? Will not his hand bestow all the blessings which we need? Christians should reflect, that they are speaking to a Father whose heart is more tender than that of the most affectionate earthly parent, from whose ample stores they may expect the supply of all their wants, and to whose all-wise disposal they may resign themselves without fear.

In speaking of the object of worship, I have shown that his essential attributes, his dispensations, and the character of a Father which he has assumed, lay a foundation for the duty of prayer, and hold out encouragement to engage in it. But the same subject is viewed in different lights, according to the different states of mind in individuals, the associations which they have formed, the dispositions which predominate, and the objects which they have in view. Hence, we find men not only contending about principles, but sometimes drawing from the same principle the most opposite inferences. A striking example is furnished by the different conclusions at which men have arrived respecting the connexion between the character of God and the duty of prayer. While we have endeavoured to prove that his character authorizes and encourages the duty, others have inferred that it is no duty at all, and have supported the assertion by an appeal to the same grounds on which our reasoning is founded. Since God knows our wants, it can serve no purpose to tell him of them, as if he needed information; and if he is a Being of infinite benevolence, there is no occasion to make use of entreaties, and to fill our mouths with arguments, because his own nature will undoubtedly prompt him to promote the happiness of his creatures. There is another argument against prayer, derived from the wisdom and immutability of God. As he is an infallible judge of what is proper to be done, he surely will do it whether we ask him or not; and if he has determined that it is not proper, vain and presumptuous is the hope that we shall prevail upon him to alter his purpose by our importunity.

In answer to these objections, I would observe, that although prayer is certainly not necessary to give information to God, yet it does not follow from this concession that it is superfluous, because there may be other reasons of great importance for which it is required. It may be enjoined as the means of impressing our own minds more deeply with a sense of our wants, and of bringing them into that state in which alone it is proper that blessings should be bestowed upon us. It may be enjoined, too, to effect us more strongly with a feeling of our dependence upon God, and to express that feeling to others who witness our prayers, with a view to convince them and ourselves, that the good things which we obtain do not come to us by chance, but by his appointment and agency. To suppose that his infinite goodness will prompt him to supply our wants without any solicitation on our part, is a hasty inference from a partial view of his character, and is contrary to the analogy of his general administration. The supposition proceeds upon the idea, that benevolence is the only attribute of his nature, and that he is instinctively and necessarily impelled by it to communicate himself, as the sun necessarily gives light, or a fountain pours out its contents. But as God is possessed of other perfections, there may be moral restraints upon his benevolence; there may be reasons why it should not be exercised indiscriminately, and why the supplications of his creatures should precede the distribution of his gifts. The argument proves

nothing, by proving too much; for if we infer from his benevolence that there is no necessity for prayer we might also infer that there is no necessity for means of any kind, and that all our wants will be supplied without labour. God, however, has not ordained that the earth should spontaneously yield its fruits, but has made its productions the reward of cultivation; and it is therefore conformable to the order of things that men should first ask, and then receive.

The argument from the wisdom of God, which, it is said, will lead him to do what is fit without being asked, establishes the very point which it is intended to disprove. There are *many* things, no doubt, which will advance his glory, and which he will therefore do independently of us; but the point now under consideration, is the communication of blessings to individuals, and the question is, Whether it would be proper to bestow favours upon them without prayer? We answer, that it would not be proper, because it would tend to cherish a spirit of impiety, to dissolve the moral relation of man to his Maker, to encourage the neglect of him, which is too natural, and the ingratitude which we so often display amidst the most abundant tokens of his goodness. Would it be proper that a guilty man should be pardoned, who will not be at pains to implore the mercy of his sovereign? or that Divine grace should help and comfort us, while we are too indifferent to request its assistance? To talk of wisdom doing what is fit to be done, as a reason why prayer should be restrained, is to use words which either mean nothing, or lead to a conclusion exactly the reverse of that which is deduced from them. God will do what is worthy of himself; but it would not be worthy of him to adopt a mode of procedure which would terminate in the extinction of religious sentiments. We acknowledge that God is immutable, and therefore acknowledge that it would be vain to hope that we shall change his purpose by our entreaties. Our prayers are offered up with no such design. We do not conceive that there is any decree which must be reversed before they can be answered. If there is any case in which it is uncertain whether our wishes are in unison with the will of God, as when we pray for the recovery of others from sickness, our petitions are presented with this reservation. In other cases, we assume, upon the authority of his word, that he is ready to bestow blessings upon us, and only waits till we have made our humble and earnest request. We ask them with confidence, because we know that he is willing to give them to those who ask in faith. We do not call upon God to alter the established order of his administration, but to act conformably to it; and this is the order, as we are informed by the highest authority: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."\* Now, here is nothing to be changed, no new inclination to be excited in the object of worship. It is agreeable to his character and his purpose to attend to the supplications of men, for he is described in his own word as the Hearer of prayer. Whatever false notions the ignorant may entertain of God, as if he resembled a man, whose judgment may be convinced by arguments, and whose affection may be gained over to those whom he has formerly regarded with aversion; true Christians believe that he is of himself disposed to fulfil our desires. They do, indeed, expect that he will do something for them, in consequence of their prayers, which he would not have done if they had not prayed; but they do not, therefore, consider him to be a changeable Being. To give blessings when they are asked, which he would not have given if they had not been asked, is not more a proof of mutability, than it is to crown with his goodness a cultivated field, which would have yielded nothing for the nourishment of men, if it had not been ploughed and sown. Prayer, then, is not an attempt to prevail upon the Almighty to alter his plan; but it either supposes or produces in us *that* state of mind which his wisdom requires as a prepara-

\* Matth. vii. 7.



tion for the reception of his favours. And certainly it does not destroy or diminish the freeness of Divine mercies, that they must be sought before they can be obtained. Who would call in question the benevolence of the man who was disposed to assist every person who applied to him?

Thus, it appears that the objections urged against prayer have no force, and are as little founded on reason as in Scripture. They have been suggested by the Spirit of irreligion, which labours to estrange man from his Maker, and says to the Almighty, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

The rule of prayer is the word of God. Experience, indeed, makes us acquainted with our wants; but the information which we derive from it, relates chiefly to the necessities of the body, and of the present life. The wants of the soul are little felt, till the mind is enlightened, and the conscience is awakened by the truths of revelation. It is only in its light that we see ourselves to be ignorant, guilty, polluted, miserable, and helpless, when left to our own resources and the assistance of our fellow-creatures. A sense of need is an indispensable pre-requisite to prayer; but it still remains to ascertain whether God is willing to relieve us, and to what extent we may expect his goodness to be exercised. It is evident that, on this subject, we can obtain satisfactory information only from himself, and that without an express manifestation of his good will, we could have no sure ground to go upon in our requests. We might ask what he has no intention to bestow, and neglect what he is ready to give. "The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer;" its doctrines exhibiting the privileges which he confers upon believers; its precepts enjoining duties which only his grace can enable us to perform; its histories relating the blessings which men in former ages have obtained; its threatenings denouncing evils from which no arm but his own can deliver us; its promises holding out to us the good things prepared for those who seek him; and the prayers of the saints being recorded as patterns to us, when we are placed in similar circumstances.

It is of the utmost importance to attend to this rule in our supplications. In reference to this subject, we may say that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from above; or, in other words, has no ground to expect any blessing from God, unless there be a warrant for asking it in his word. The prayers of ungodly men, for they sometimes pray, are not regulated by this standard, but by the suggestions of imagination, and the desires of their hearts. Give us riches, they say, give us honours, give us long life, give us something to gratify our appetites, our ambition, our avarice. Even if they should happen to present their petitions for blessings which God has promised, they have no respect to his wisdom and goodness, as pledged in his faithful word, but are impelled solely by their eager wishes to obtain what will contribute to improve their condition. But we are not permitted to assail his throne with our crude and random petitions. The spirit, who "makes intercession for the saints," enables them to intercede for themselves, "according to the will of God."\* His grace is the source of supply; and it therefore becomes our duty to conform our requests to the rule or measure of distribution established by himself. We proceed safely, and may feel the utmost confidence, when we found our petitions upon Scripture; for we are certain that, in this case, we are doing what is agreeable to God, and there is a perfect harmony between his will and our desires. But, as soon as we permit our own views of expedience and advantage to dictate, we must be perplexed with doubt and the fear of offending, unless all misgivings of mind be precluded by profound ignorance, and complete moral insensibility. Then only can we pray in faith, when we have a Divine declaration or promise as the ground of our petition, and can address God in

\* Rom. viii. 27.

the words of the holy Psalmist: "And now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said."\*

The word of God is our directory in prayer. It holds out encouragement to us to pray for all blessings; for he says, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."† Nothing really necessary to us can be pointed out, which is not contained in some declaration or promise. The blessings for which we should pray may be distributed into two classes, temporal and spiritual. Spiritual blessings are, the pardon of sin, peace with God, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the continual influences of grace, the Divine presence in the ordinances of religion, assistance in duties and temptations, comfort in affliction and its salutary fruits, hope in death, and a happy eternity. The incalculable value of these blessings should give them the first place in our prayers, and excite our fervent and importunate desires; and that man is destitute of the spirit of devotion, who looks upon them as secondary things, and is more remiss in asking them than in his petitions for temporal blessings. With respect to the latter, it may be observed, that we have no authority to seek great things for ourselves. On this subject, we are altogether disqualified to judge, and should keep a strict watch upon our desires, which are naturally immoderate, and would prompt us to solicit what it might not be for our good to possess, or for the glory of God to bestow. We ought to content ourselves with praying for a competent portion, and should leave its amount to be determined by Divine wisdom. We may pray for health, and the continuance of life, and other worldly enjoyments; but, at the same time, we should cultivate a submissive temper, which will acquiesce in the event without a murmur. Our Saviour has given us directions in the following words: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."‡ The first care of every man should be to obtain an interest in the salvation of Christ, and God will provide for his temporal wants. But our Saviour is not to be understood as forbidding us to pray for temporal blessings, either in this passage, or in the preceding verses, where he gives this admonition to his disciples, "Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."§ The knowledge of our heavenly Father is not adduced as a reason why we should not pray for food and raiment, nor is this the design of the promise, that they shall be given, but the intention of both is to preserve his followers from anxiety, and fear, and distrust. His injunctions in one place, must be explained consistently with those in another; and while he assures such as believe in him, that those things which are needful for the body shall not be withheld from them, he shows it to be their duty to make them the subject of their petitions to God, by teaching them to say, "Give us this day our daily bread."

\* 2 Sam. vii. 25.

† Phil. iv. 6, 7.

‡ Matth. vi. 33.

§ Ib. 31, 32.



## LECTURE XCIV.

## ON PRAYER.

On Prayer for others.—Public Prayer.—Private Prayer.—Secret Prayer.—Ejaculatory Prayer.—Seasons of Prayer.—Forms of Prayer Objectionable.—Acceptable Prayer.—Answer to Prayer.

IN the preceding lecture, I explained the nature of prayer, showed that it should be addressed to God alone, removed some objections against it, pointed out the rule, and specified the blessings for which we should present our petitions.

It is acknowledged that our prayers should not be confined to ourselves, but that there are others in whose behalf we should offer up our supplications to God. Who these are, we learn from the following words: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."\* While it is evident from Scripture, and from the dictates of nature, that certain individuals, related to us by the ties of blood, and friendship, and religion, should have a particular place in our prayers, it appears from the words now quoted, that men of every nation, and of every degree, should be remembered by us when we draw near to the throne of grace. Our hearts, like our religion, should be expanded to embrace the whole family of mankind.

It is an inference from the command to pray for ourselves and others, that there is some efficacy in prayer. It is not only an expression of our desires, but a mean of obtaining the divine blessing. It is improper, therefore, to consider it as solely intended for our personal improvement, by awakening devout sentiments and feelings, and giving scope for the exercise of Christian tempers; there is a connexion between it and the end proposed, similar to the connexion between means and ends in the economy of nature. To encourage Christians to pray for their afflicted brethren, the Apostle James says, that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;"† and confirms the assertion by the example of Elijah, in answer to whose prayers, rain was first suspended and afterwards given. If it should be thought that their case was singular and miraculous, I would refer you to the words of our Saviour which are addressed to his disciples in general: "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you."‡ The efficacy which we ascribe to prayer, does not resemble that which the heathens imagined to be in certain words, by the repetition of which the aid of invisible beings was obtained; nor does it arise from any merit in the duty, which imposes an obligation upon the Supreme Being to grant our request. It is the result of a free gracious constitution, by which God has engaged to bestow blessings upon those who ask them in faith. Strictly, the efficacy of prayer proceeds from the divine promise. We succeed in our supplications, because God has pledged himself to attend to them; but they must precede the exercise of his goodness, and no encouragement is given to us to expect any thing from him, if they are withheld. When he promises blessings he says, "For these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel."§

The efficacy of prayer being ascertained, we are authorized to hope that our supplications will be useful to others as well as to ourselves, and are encouraged to intercede for them. We should be excited to the performance of the

\* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.    † James v. 16.    ‡ Matth. vii. 7.    § Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

duty, by reflecting that they as well as we are dependent upon God; that they are subject to the same necessities, and infirmities, and distresses, which fall to our lot; that they have wants which he only can supply, and sins which he only can pardon; that they are actuated by the same desire for happiness which we feel, are in danger of eternal perdition, being by nature children of wrath, but are capable of heavenly bliss. If they pray for themselves, we should unite our interest with theirs, if we have any interest with the object of worship, that they may not fail of success; if, thoughtless and impious, they are living without God in the world, they are the more the objects of our pity, and we are the more loudly called to remember them because they are forgetful of themselves. Our prayers will thus be a becoming expression of love to our brethren of mankind; and among all the offices of kindness by which we should show our love, there is none more decisive, and more fitted to accomplish the end which we have in view, if we sincerely desire their welfare, than our earnest recommendation of them to the favour and care of the Father of mercies.

In behalf of others, we should ask the same temporal and spiritual blessings which we ask for ourselves. We should pray for the poor, that their wants may be supplied; for the afflicted, that they may be restored to health, and fitted by divine grace for life or death; for mourners, that they may be comforted; for the oppressed, that they may be delivered. We should pray for the young, that the seeds of piety may be sown in their hearts; for the old, that they may have wisdom to improve the short remainder of life, and to exhibit a salutary example to their inferiors in years; for persons in the other stages of life, that they may perform the duties of their stations, and fulfil the purpose of their being. We should pray for those who are in sin, that they may be awakened and converted; and for those who are in a state of grace, that their faith may be strengthened, and that amidst difficulties and temptations, they may persevere to the end. We should pray for magistrates, that they may be just, and may rule over us in the fear of the Lord, and that under their protection we may enjoy all the rights and privileges which belong to us as men and Christians. We should pray for the ministers of religion, that they may be faithful and zealous, and that their labours may be crowned with success; and for the Christian people, that they may receive "with meekness the ingrafted seed of the word," and walk in the ordinances and commandments of the Lord. We should pray for the catholic church, that truth, and peace, and holiness may flourish in it; that its limits may be extended till it comprehend all the inhabited regions of the earth; and that the time may come when it shall be said to it, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord hath arisen upon thee." "Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side."\*

One exception however is mentioned by the Apostle John: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it."† There is a degree of obscurity in these words; but the sin unto death most probably is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which alone is pronounced to be unpardonable. Its irremissible nature is evidently the reason why prayer is forbidden for the person who is guilty of it. It is extremely difficult to say in what it consists; and as Christians are divided in their sentiments on this subject, and it is impossible to determine when a person is chargeable with it,—if it was not confined, as some have thought, to the age of miracles,—the exception stated by John is practically no exception to us. We may pray for the greatest sinners, since, for aught that we can tell,

\* Is. lx. 1. 4.

† 1 John v. 16.



they are within the reach of mercy, and God may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

Prayer may be distinguished into public, private, and secret.

Public prayer is that which is offered up in the church, or in any other place, where many are assembled to observe the ordinances of religion; and it appears from ancient records to have made a part of the service in the meetings of Christians from the earliest times. It is an acknowledgment of God by those who are present; an acknowledgment of their dependence upon him, of their expectations from him, of their desire for his grace, by which only the institutions of religion will be rendered effectual. On such occasions one necessarily speaks in the name of the rest, but all are understood to join in the petitions. It is not the minister alone who prays, it is the congregation which addresses God by his mouth; and every man should make the petitions his own by serious attention to them, and by stirring up the sentiments and affections of which they are expressive.

Private prayer is offered up in select associations, and particularly in families. Our Saviour has given an example in his prayers for his disciples; it is implied in the accounts of good men, which we find in the Scriptures; and it has been practised in all ages by the saints. The motive which excites a man to pray for himself, will lead him also to pray for his family, and with them. The relations in which they stand to one another give them a sort of individuality; as there are benefits which they all need, so there are mercies for which they should be all thankful; and interwoven as their interests are, the good which any of them obtains will be regarded as a common blessing. There is no fear of God in that house, in which the exercises of devotion are unknown; and it is worthy of observation, while the fact may seem strange, and is deeply to be lamented, that it is only among professed Christians that private worship is neglected, and that Mahometans and even Heathens act more consistently in carrying their religion into the bosom of their families, and the ordinary transactions of life.

Secret prayer is offered up by an individual in some place of retirement. Withdrawing from the world, and even from his most intimate friends, he converses with God alone. Seclusion is necessary to the collection of his thoughts, and the full unrestrained expression of his desires. He has wants which God alone can supply, and sorrows amidst which he alone can comfort him; he needs counsel to direct him in his personal conduct, and assistance under infirmities, the sense of which overwhelms him. Our Saviour has enjoined this duty upon us: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."\* Secret prayer is so characteristic of a Christian, that we may pronounce him to be a mere pretender to the name who habitually neglects it, or contents himself with the occasional and formal performance of the duty. When Ananias seemed to doubt of the conversion of Paul, or at least hesitated to commit himself to a man of whom he had never heard before but in the character of a persecutor, our Lord gave him this sign, "Behold, he prayeth."† This will be the constant effect of the grace of God in the soul of man. It will awaken feelings which will irresistibly draw him to the throne of grace; and it will be as impossible for him to live without prayer, as to live without his daily food. His graces would decline; his spirits would sink; his activity would abate; his joy would fail, as the fruits of the earth languish and wither in the want of rain. Prayer brings down the Divine blessing, with all its precious attendants, light, and peace, and strength, and hope.

I may add to these, ejaculatory prayer, or prayer not offered up on stated

\* *Math. vi. 6.*

† *Acts ix. 11.*

occasions, and in consequence of a previous purpose, but called forth by some unexpected circumstance; prayer prompted by some unforeseen perplexity and danger, by something afflicting which we see or hear, by an unlooked for deliverance, or by the sudden incursion of temptation. So natural, indeed, is it to have recourse to God under strong momentary impressions, that often they call upon him then, who at other times spend days and weeks without ever bowing a knee; and in this impulse of the mind have originated those exclamations or prayers,—that God would bless and preserve them,—which are so frequently in the mouths of the profane. The ejaculations of which I speak, are the effusions of a devout soul, which knows God, and loves him, and spontaneously flees to him as its refuge in the season of need. Assured that he is at hand, and that his ear is always open, it implores his favour, and commits itself to his care. Hence, we perceive of how much importance it is to cultivate a habit of piety, and to establish, if I may speak so, a familiar correspondence with him who compasses our path, and is acquainted with all our ways; for occasions will often occur when our own resources will prove insufficient, and no friend will be at hand to help, or when a friend could afford us no effectual aid. How happy, in such a case, is he who is not confounded and driven to despair, like the men of the world, but knows of an asylum to which he may run, and, by the prayer of faith, throws himself into the arms of almighty power and love!

The design of one of our Saviour's parables is to teach us, "that men should pray always, and not faint."\* And an Apostle exhorts Christians to "pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."† Such passages cannot be misunderstood. Uninterrupted prayer is impossible; both mind and body would fail, if they were not relieved by intervals of repose, and a change of employment; and when devotion is prolonged beyond a reasonable time, varying, no doubt, according to the circumstances of individuals, it degenerates into bodily exercise, the mere labour of the lips. The business allotted to man in this world, comprehends a variety of duties which demand his attention, and will occupy a considerable portion of his time. Persecution first drove Christians into deserts, and from this accident arose the practice which afterwards led thousands to bury themselves in solitudes, and within the walls of a cloister, where their days were spent in the offices of piety. But it is superstition which has suggested the idea of superior sanctity, in thus abandoning the active duties of life; and had the voice of true religion been attended to, it would have brought them back to the world, and prevailed upon them to enter into the common relations of society, and conscientiously to perform the duties arising from them. There are two tables of the law, and he only is a perfect Christian, who makes both the rule of his conduct. Nothing is meant by the exhortation to constant prayer, but that we should be frequently and regularly engaged in it; that we should pray at all the stated times; that we should comply with every call to it from Providence and our own feelings; that we should cultivate a habit of devotion, and lift up our hearts to God, when we are walking by the way, as well as when we are sitting in our houses; in company as well as in solitude; in the midst of business, as well as in the hours sacred to religion. When Cornelius is said to have "prayed to God alway,"‡ the historian, by specifying the ninth hour, plainly signifies his meaning to be, that the centurion regularly engaged in prayer at the hours which were observed by the Jews.

By these remarks, I am naturally led to inquire what are the proper seasons of prayer. The holy Psalmist speaks, in one place, of engaging in devotional exercises seven times a-day;§ in another, of morning, evening, and noon;|| and again he says, that it is a good thing to show forth the loving kindness of God

\* Luke xviii. 1. † Eph. vi. 18 ‡ Acts x. 2. § Ps. cxix. 164. || Ib. iv. 17



in the morning, and his faithfulness every night.\* Religion ought not to be subjected to mechanical rules. Although it is enjoined by authority, yet its exercises must be spontaneous, or they will not be acceptable to God; and their multiplicity will not compensate for this defect. Yet it may be subjected to regulation, without interfering with its free and liberal spirit; and although no attempt should be made to impose restraints upon a person whose heart impels him to make frequent approaches to the throne of God, and no man can decide for another in a matter which his own feelings alone can determine; yet, we may say without hesitation, that there are two seasons which seem to be pointed out by the hand of nature itself as peculiarly suitable,—the morning and the evening. These, however, are not mentioned as the only seasons, but as times at which there is a particular call to the duty; which have been uniformly dedicated to a sacred use by the people of God; and which, therefore, should not be permitted to pass without a solemn address to Him who makes the sun know his time of rising and going down. There would be no overstraining in considering the law which commanded the Israelites to offer sacrifices in the morning and the evening, as intended to admonish us that we should begin and end the day with our sacrifices of prayer and praise.

In the morning we have awaked from a refreshing sleep, and life has been, as it were, restored to us with fresh vigour after the exhaustion caused by the labours of the preceding day. As our situation evidently calls for praises to the Author of our mercies, so it no less plainly points out the seasonableness of prayer, in the view of the events of the day upon which we have entered. There are duties to be performed, of great importance to ourselves and others, and connected with the glory of God, by a failure in which we shall incur guilt, and a train of consequences fatal to our peace and happiness. There are temptations to be encountered, arising from our intercourse with the world, against which our own vigilance is an insufficient defence, as they often assail us in an imperceptible manner, and our hearts are too prone to give them a favourable reception. We are exposed to danger at every step; and the calamities which befall men in circumstances that give no warning of evil, are a proof of our constant insecurity while we are not under the protection of Providence. These considerations show that the morning, when we are about to plunge into the busy perilous scene, is a season when we should solemnly commit ourselves, and those with whom we are connected, to the care of the Most High, who is near to them who call upon him in truth and sincerity. The man who, by the prayer of faith, has obtained the protection of the Almighty, may walk forth with humble confidence; not trusting in his prayers, but in Him to whom they were addressed, and assuring himself that no real evil shall be permitted to befall him. “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”†

When the evening comes, there is a new call, not only to thanksgiving, but also to confession and supplication. If we review the transactions of the day, we shall not fail to perceive that we have been ungrateful for mercies, and negligent of duties; that we have offended in deed, and word, and, above all, in thought; and our only refuge from guilt and its consequences is in the Divine mercy, through Jesus Christ. We are about to lie down upon our beds, and to close our eyes in sleep, from which we may never awake. Is not this a season to implore the favour of that Being into whose immediate presence death will introduce us, and earnestly to entreat that we may be so prepared for the awful event, that we shall find ourselves in that blessed world on which the shades of night never descend? We are exposed to dangers by night as well as by day. The storm may arise, and bury us under the ruins of our houses. We may awake amidst flames from which it is impossible to escape. The

\* Ps. xcii. 2.

† Ib. xci. 4.

midnight robber may break into our dwellings, and, to make sure of his prey, may deprive us of life. What security have we for our preservation but the providence of God? How unavailing would our precautions be, if the Lord himself did not keep the house! The fearlessness with which many lie down and rise up, is the effect of thoughtlessness and insensibility. In calculating chances, they appear to be in their favour, and the agency of God does not enter into their reckoning. But rational, solid, imperturbable peace, can be enjoyed only by the man who commits himself to the Shepherd of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps. "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."\*

The question, Whether forms of prayer should be used in the worship of God? has given rise to much controversy, particularly between the Church of England and Dissenters. That they may be lawfully adopted by children, and others who are incapable of praying without assistance, we do not deny; but the subject of our present inquiry is, Whether a liturgy should be composed and enjoined upon the ministers of religion in their public administrations, and private Christians should be called upon to adhere to it in their families and closets? It is certain that no trace of this practice can be discovered in the Apostolical church; and it has been satisfactorily shown, that, although afterwards an order was established for the administration of the sacraments, and in different places the prayers might bear a considerable resemblance to one another in respect of their matter, prescribed forms were unknown for several centuries. When Justin Martyr is describing the worship of the second century, he says, "that the president or officiating minister offers up prayers and thanksgiving—*ὅση δύναμις αὐτῷ*—according to his ability;"† an expression which would be unmeaning if he had read prayers from a book, as in this case no mental ability is required, and it is only necessary that he should use his eyes and his voice. Tertullian, in the same century, says, *Sine monitore quia de pectore oramus*; "We pray without a monitor, because we pray from the heart."‡

We object to forms of prayer, on the ground that there is no warrant for them in Scripture, and that they are not sanctioned by the example of the primitive church. We object to them, because they interfere with the office of the Holy Spirit, who is sent not only to inspire us with devotional sentiments, but also to suggest petitions; for this surely is implied in his "helping our infirmities," "and making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."|| And if we dispassionately reflect upon the subject, it will appear more consonant to common sense, as well as to religion, that a person should be allowed to express the feelings and desires which spontaneously arise in his mind, than that he should be under the necessity of conforming them to a standard prepared by another. Would it not be preposterous to confine a son to a collection of written requests, from which he was never to deviate, in his addresses to his Father? This leads me to state farther, that we object to forms of prayer, because they cannot be adapted to the endlessly-diversified and ever-varying circumstances of the people of God, and must therefore prove a painful and injurious restraint upon the liberty of spirit which the divine promises encourage us to exercise. The minister must pray for nothing in public, nor the private Christian in his family and closet, however urgent is the demand for it, if he do not find it in his books. We object, once more, to forms of prayer, on account of their tendency to produce coldness and listlessness in the offices of religion. The human mind needs to be kept awake; and nothing is so much calculated to throw it into an inattentive, slumbering state, as the dulness of uniformity. The perpetual recurrence of the same sounds, the accustomed transitions from one subject to another, and the unvaried

\* Ps. iv. 8.

† Apolog. Secund.

‡ Apolog. c. 30.

§ Rom. viii. 26.



length of the service, must create a monotonous state of mind, if not an absence of thought, and convert prayer into a mere bodily exercise. The careless and unvaried manner in which prayers are often read in the English Church, proves too well that there is ground for this objection.

Yet the praise bestowed upon the liturgy of that church exceeds all bounds. It is "an excellent liturgy," an "admirable liturgy," an "incomparable liturgy," an "all but inspired liturgy." This extravagant language is quite in unison with the pretensions of that arrogant church, which like the Church of Rome, her prototype in pride, says, "I sit as a queen, and shall never see sorrow;" looking haughtily down upon us as hardly worthy to be accounted Christians, pronouncing our assemblies to be conventicles, and our ministers to be without ordination; and sometimes going so far as to exclude us from any interest in the promises, and leaving us to what is called the uncovenanted mercy of God. "Let another praise thee," says the wise man, "and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." If this wonderful liturgy be brought to the test of Scripture and sound reason, its vaunted excellence will vanish as a dream of fancy. To say nothing of the superstitious rites which it inculcates, and the false doctrine which it teaches, while it assumes in the burial service the salvation of all but self-murderers and excommunicated persons, and asserts the regeneration of all infants who are baptized, it has been justly charged with defects and redundancies; with omitting some important petitions, and unnecessarily repeating others; with dealing in generalities, without descending to particulars upon which the mind could fix; confessing, for example, sin in general, without specifying particular sins; with joining together petitions which have no kind of connexion; with prescribing prayers which contain, perhaps, only a single petition, expressed in two or three words, while the remaining space is filled up with a verbose introduction and conclusion. A serious objection is the shortness of the prayers. The longest is ended almost before you have time to bring your mind into a proper frame for joining in it; and some of them, consisting only of a single sentence, are finished almost as soon as they are begun. Besides the interruption which is thus given to devotional feelings, there is a want of dignity, and of sense, in a collection of what may be called shreds and fragments of prayers. The Lord's prayer is sometimes introduced out of place, or where no person can perceive any reason for using it; and it is brought forward so often, four or five times in the course of one service, as to have the appearance of vain repetition, and to give the idea of children conning a task, rather than of rational creatures worshipping God with the understanding. This is that boasted liturgy which has been extolled with bombastic praise, and, in comparison of which, the extemporaneous prayers of other churches are despised as vain babblings, or the incoherent effusions of enthusiasm. I have no hesitation in saying, that, in those churches, prayers far superior are offered up every Sabbath; and I have frequently heard a prayer poured out by a man of God with the assistance of the Holy Ghost, which, in my judgment, was of more value than the whole of the liturgy. Let us be thankful that we stand in no need of its proffered assistance, and that our devotion is not encumbered and impeded by any such human imposition.

From the observations which have been already made, we can be at no loss to determine what prayers are acceptable. It is evident that they are prayers addressed to God alone, and not to any created being, however highly exalted; that they are prayers offered up in the name of Christ, the only Mediator between God and man; and that they are prayers regulated by the Scriptures, and consisting solely in petitions for such blessings as God has promised to bestow. I may add, that in prayer the understanding must be exercised, or it will not be a rational service. If men repeat a number of words without knowing their

meaning, or without reflecting upon their import; if they are ignorant or inattentive, they are guilty of mocking God, and instead of drawing down his blessing, will incur his displeasure. And here we may take notice of the practice of praying in an unknown tongue, when others are expected to join with us; a practice so contrary to common sense, that not the shadow of an argument can be alleged for it; and it rests solely upon the same authority which has instituted and corrupted the other ordinances of Christ, and established iniquity and absurdity by law. Had there been no liturgy in the Church of Rome, her ministers would pray in the languages of the countries in which they officiate; but the forms of an infallible church are immutable, and her service is still performed in her ancient language, which has ceased to be vernacular for a thousand years. Prayers must be offered up in sincerity; for God regards not the words of the mouth, but the desires of the heart, and holds in abhorrence those who present to him hypocritical petitions. "This people draweth near to me with their mouths, and honoureth me with their lips; but their hearts are far from me."\* They should be offered up with fervour of spirit, which is the fire that should kindle our sacrifices. We would not grant a favour to a person who asked it in so indifferent a manner, as to show that he was careless whether he obtained it or not. Now God, who knows our hearts, will dismiss those without an answer, whom he perceives to entertain no sense of the value of his blessings, and upon whom therefore they would be thrown away. This qualification of prayer is connected with importunity and perseverance; with importunity, which consists in pressing our suit, and using arguments to enforce it; with perseverance, which renews its supplications when disappointed, applies again and again, and does not desist till such an answer is obtained as was given to the Syrophenician woman, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."†

We have already seen that there is an efficacy in prayer, or that, in consequence of the appointment and promise of God, it is effectual to obtain temporal and spiritual blessings. There would be no motive to the duty if God were inexorable, or if such an order was established, that the good things which we need would come to us as a matter of course, without any effort on our part to procure them. Where there is such an order or constitution of things, all supplication is superseded. We do not pray that the sun may rise the next morning, because his return is secured by the ordinance of heaven, which will not be changed till the end of time; but we pray that we may again open our eyes to behold his light. The one event will certainly happen; the other will or will not take place according to the Divine determination. Prayer is offered up in the expectation of an answer; and when it is the prayer of faith, it is not presented in vain: "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers."‡ On this department of the subject, let me request your attention to the following observations.

First, God sometimes returns an immediate answer to the prayers of his people. In proof of this, many instances might be collected from the Scriptures. When the Israelites, in their flight from Egypt, were entangled by the Red Sea in front, the mountains on either hand, and the host of Pharaoh behind them, the Lord said to Moses, who, in this distress, was pouring out his prayer before him, Why standest thou, crying unto me? "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward;"§ and immediately the waters were divided, and opened a passage to the opposite shore. When Elijah entreated God to determine, by a visible interposition, the controversy between himself and Baal, fire descended from heaven and consumed not only the sacrifice, but also the stones of the altar.|| These are the words of God concerning his peo

\* Matth. xv. 8.

† Ib. 28.

‡ 1 Pet. iii. 12.

§ Exod. xiv. 15.

|| 1 Kings xviii. 38.



ple: "They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."\* The idea suggested, is the promptitude of the answer. While the petitions are yet upon their lips, and before that they have had time to express all that they had conceived in their hearts, he will send down from heaven the blessing which they desire. No sooner had the Apostles prayed that "the Lord would grant unto his servants, that with all boldness they might speak his word," than "the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,"† who inspired them with heavenly eloquence and undaunted courage. God returns a speedy answer to the prayers of his people when the case is urgent, and delay would prove injurious; and while he thus puts honour upon the duty of prayer, and holds out encouragement to persevere in it, he furnishes a proof, by which all should be convinced, that there is profit in serving the Lord. When an audible answer had been returned from heaven to our Lord upon a certain occasion, he said, "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes."‡

Secondly, Although God has heard the prayers of his people, yet he sometimes delays to answer them. Whatever conclusion their impatient minds may draw, their petitions are not rejected because the favour asked is not immediately conferred. David was convinced of this truth, as we see from his exercise recorded in the hundred and thirtieth psalm: "Lord, hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." Afterwards he adds, "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning."§ This is the language of expectation. He did not receive an immediate answer; but he did not sink into despondency. He looked for the blessing, as the sick man or the benighted traveller waits for the morning light, and supported himself by the faithful promises of God, which were the foundation of his hope: "Though the vision tarry," says the prophet, "wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry."|| While God grants full liberty to his people to address him on every occasion, and promises that all their wants shall be supplied, he does not permit them to dictate to him with respect to the times and seasons of his interposition. His own wisdom, and not their anxiety, is the rule of his procedure. They are incompetent judges, as they know little more than their own feelings, and are unable to take a comprehensive view of the relations and consequences of the Divine dispensations. It is enough to be assured that God never turns away his ear from the prayer of faith, and that nothing truly good shall be withheld from those who fear him. Perhaps they are not yet in a proper state of mind for the reception of the blessings which they ask, not duly humbled by a sense of their unworthiness, and consequently not prepared to estimate them according to their value, and to feel all that warmth of gratitude which would lead to sincere and fervent thanksgiving. The delay may serve the salutary purpose of awakening their dormant piety, or of increasing its vigour and activity. It will teach them to live by faith, to support themselves by dependence upon his promises, to serve him in hope, instead of always being impelled by the actual experience of his goodness. It will lead their thoughts more to God, and render their supplications more earnest and importunate; and such is the constitution of human nature, that mercies which have been long sought, and sometimes despaired of, but at last obtained, acquire in our eyes a double value, and are enjoyed with a keener relish. For these and other reasons, there is sometimes a considerable interval between the prayer and the answer, but none of those who wait upon God shall

\* Is. lxx. 23, 24.

† Acts iv. 29, 31.

‡ John xii. 30.

§ Ps. cxxx. 2, 5, 6.

|| Hab. ii. 3.

be ashamed. The prayer was heard when it was presented; it was remembered, although the saint might have been tempted to exclaim, 'The Lord hath forgotten me;' and when the proper season has arrived, a testimony of the Divine favour is given to convince them, that blessed are they who wait upon the Lord.

Thirdly, The prayer of faith is heard even when the blessing sought is withheld, but another more expedient is bestowed. When the disciples, at their last meeting with our Saviour, said to him, "Lord, wilt thou, at this time, restore the kingdom to Israel?" he did not return an answer, for a reason which is assigned in the following words: "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."\* But, although he refused to gratify their curiosity on this subject, yet he promised them what was of far greater value than the information which they were anxious to obtain: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." He would give them the Spirit, to teach them all mysteries, and all necessary knowledge. When the Apostle Paul thrice entreated the Lord, that the messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him, might be removed, he obtained only this answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."† He was not relieved from his present distress, but he was assured of grace to support him. God reserves to himself the power of judging what answer he shall return to the prayers of his people; and it is a power in which they should cheerfully acquiesce, as it will be always exercised for their best interests. From their imperfect knowledge, they may commit mistakes with respect to the object of their requests; but their petitions are pleasing to him, as expressions of their faith, and hope, and humble desires; and he therefore bestows in return a blessing more suitable to their circumstances and conducive to their good, which they afterwards perceive to be preferable to that which was selected by themselves.

I observe, in the last place, that God hears the prayers of his people, even when he does not return any direct answer to them. A Christian may pray, as he is bound in duty, for the recovery of a friend who is sick, and yet his friend may die; or he may pray for the conversion of particular persons, who may never come to the knowledge of the truth. In such cases a distinction should be made, and we must say, that, although the prayers are not heard, so far as this implies the obtaining of an answer, yet they are acceptable to God, as proceeding from a holy heart, and being conformable to the general rule of Scripture. The exercise of grace may be pleasing to God, although the occasion of its exercise be a mistake. The love which a saint bears to a hypocrite, whom, in charity, he supposes to be a saint, is the fulfilment of the law, and receives the Divine approbation as well as any other duty. The unworthiness of the object does not destroy its value, because his real character is unknown, and the formal reason of it is his profession of piety. Notwithstanding the error of those members of the Church at Rome, who, not considering that the ceremonial law was abolished, observed a distinction of days and meats from a principle of conscience, we are assured by Paul that the Lord received them.‡ We may therefore conclude that, although the people of God should, in particular circumstances, present their petitions for favours which his wisdom does not judge it proper to bestow, yet he is pleased with their prayers, because they are founded on the general promises of Scripture. Such prayers ought not to be considered as lost. They are among the works of faith, and labours of love, which God will not forget.

The prayer of faith is always heard. It brings down, sooner or later, the specific blessing, or another of equal value; and although no direct answer should be returned, it is still a sacrifice pleasing to God, through Jesus Christ.

\* Acts i. 6, 7.

† 2 Cor. xii. 9.

‡ Rom. xiv. 3.



"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need."\*

## LECTURE XCV.

### ON PRAYER.

The Lord's Prayer.—Its Use as a Form and as a Pattern.—Is it a Compilation?—Its Parts.—Commentary upon it.—Dispute Respecting the Genuineness of the Doxology.

IN the course of his sermon on the mount, our Saviour said to his disciples, "After this manner, pray ye. Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."† The same prayer in substance occurs in the gospel of Luke,‡ but there are some verbal differences, and the doxology is omitted. On this account, and because it was pronounced by our Lord the second time, in answer to the request of one of his disciples, who said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples," Origen, in his treatise, *περι ευχης*, thinks that they should be considered as different prayers. This, however, is too nice a distinction; and it is not easy to see on what it is founded, as with the alteration of a word or two, all the petitions are exactly the same. If you should inquire how this disciple came to ask Christ to teach them to pray, although he had taught them already, the same Father will tell you, that perhaps he was not present when it was first delivered, or he had forgotten what was said.

It has been asked, whether this prayer was intended to be a form, or a pattern; and the question has given rise to various opinions, and to arguments for and against. Those who maintain that it is only a pattern, besides other reasons, allege the words in Matthew, "After this manner, pray ye;" but their criticism is founded on the English version. The original word *οὕτως*, may be rendered, "after this manner," but also more simply, "thus," and is used in Scripture, in reference to the identical words which were spoken. They also forget that in Luke, our Lord said without any qualifying term, "When ye pray, say." If it were only meant, that our Lord did not intend to confine them to this prayer, to enjoin the constant unaltered use of it, to prohibit prayer in any other terms, we should certainly concur with them; but it is not a little surprising to find some persons discovering an anxiety to prove, that we should cautiously avoid the words which were dictated by the Son of God himself, and should apply them to no other purpose, but as a guide in prayers of our own composition. It has the appearance of impiety, or, to use a softer term, of very great folly; and it can be accounted for only on the principle which directs the conduct of weak-minded men, that of guarding against one extreme by running into another. They imagine that they cannot remove to too great a distance from any thing which they conceive to be wrong, and if their antagonist should go to the east, they know of no better way of testifying their disapprobation than by walking in all haste to the west. There is no doubt

\* Heb. iv. 16

† Matth. vi. 9—13.

‡ Luke xi. 2—4.

that in some churches, and particularly the Church of England, the Lord's prayer is improperly used, being introduced into the service unseasonably, and repeated over and over, as if there were supposed to be some magical virtue in the words. But this is no reason why others should treat it, as Hezekiah did the brazen serpent, which he broke in pieces, because it had been made the object of idolatrous worship. It is not profaned by man's abuse; it is still the best and most comprehensive of all prayers; and when offered up with suitable sentiments and affections, is acceptable to our Father in heaven. Who is the presumptuous man who dares to think, that he can find more proper words to express the desires of his heart? I acknowledge, at the same time, that it was chiefly intended to be a pattern; that it is only a summary of the blessings for which we should pray; and that the Scriptures show, and our own hearts dictate, that in our addresses to God, it is necessary to be more full and particular. But this concession does not in any degree derogate from its excellence. As a pattern it is unavoidably concise; and its design was not to enter into a minute detail, but to furnish us with hints which we might improve, with the assistance of the other parts of the word of God. Thus we unite the two contending opinions, which never would have been disjoined had it not been for ignorant zeal. The Lord's prayer is both a form and a pattern.

It is the opinion of many learned men, that this prayer is not an original composition, but a compilation. They affirm that it was not dictated by our Saviour in the exercise of his own wisdom, and that he only displayed judgment in selecting it from the prayers which were then current among the Jews. Accordingly, quotations have been given from their different books, in which we find the same or nearly the same expressions, which are here brought together.\* It has been said, that it is contrary to all probability, that such a correspondence of words and phrases should have happened by chance; and hence either of these suppositions must be made, that the Jews have transferred those things from the gospel to the use of the Synagogue, or that Christ borrowed them from the Jews, and consecrated them for the use of his disciples. Either supposition, it is added, will redound to the honour of our Saviour. If the Jews, the avowed enemies of the Gospel, have adopted this prayer from it, they show their high opinion of its wisdom and piety, which has led them to receive it into their liturgy, notwithstanding their violent prejudices against its Author. But it is incredible that they would have yielded so far, and it is more reasonable to believe that our Lord, in accommodation to them, converted to his own purpose these scattered fragments of devotion, these golden remains of ancient piety. There is one point, however, which it is necessary previously to ascertain, whether the books in which the component parts of this prayer are found, are more ancient than the days of our Saviour. If, as I presume, they are all of a posterior date, the idea that our Saviour borrowed from the Jews, rests on slender grounds, as we have no certainty that the expressions which we now find in their books were then known to them. In estimating probabilities, men are often influenced by prior associations which have a powerful effect upon their judgment; and hence what seems probable to one person, may appear in a different light to another. I confess that I cannot reconcile the supposition, that our Lord was indebted to any human help in instructing his disciples with the idea which I entertain of the dignity of his character, as the great Prophet, whose doctrine was from heaven, and not from men; and nothing should induce me to assent to it, but evidence much stronger than has yet been produced. In this as in similar cases, the claim of originality should be decided by the question of priority. We know *when* our Lord delivered this prayer to his disciples; but we have no certain information respecting the time when the corresponding expressions were adopted by the Jews. It is a con-

\* Vide Witsii Exercit. in Orat. Dom. vi. § 32—33.



lecture of a learned man, that they came into use among them, by means of such of the Judaizing Christians as apostatized, who having been taught this prayer, communicated it to their brethren. As it contains no reference to Jesus as the Messiah, and there is no part of it which does not accord with their own Scriptures, as understood by themselves, it would the more readily meet with a favourable reception. If it should still seem incredible, that the Jews should have ever been persuaded to give the sanction of their approbation to any thing, of which a person so obnoxious as Jesus of Nazareth was the Author, I would remind you that the case is not without a parallel, for never was man more hated by Papists than Calvin, and the object of more violent abuse, and yet it is known that some of their writers have made free use of his works in the composition of their own.

The Lord's prayer consists of three parts,—an address to God in the character of our Father, a number of petitions, and a doxology. I intend to give you a short commentary upon it in the subsequent part of this lecture.

Our Saviour directs us to begin with addressing God in the character of our Father: "Our Father which art in heaven." Now, God may be called our Father on two accounts; first, because he is the Author of our being; and, secondly, because by his grace he has adopted us into his family. In the first respect, he is the Father of the whole human race; and hence the Prophet asks, "Have we not all one Father, and hath not one God created us?"\* Creation and generation are indeed two things totally different, and it is upon the latter that the paternal relation is founded; but they agree in the general idea of the communication of life, and hence God is called our Father, although he did not beget, but created us. In the second respect, he is the Father of believers alone, or of those who have been made his children by faith in Christ Jesus; and it is primarily, although not exclusively, in this relation that we should contemplate him when we offer up our prayers. His greatness would overawe us, and the reflection that he gave us existence, would not relieve us from our fears, conscious as we are that we have been ungrateful for the gift, and have degraded our nature, which was originally adorned with his image; but the grace, and condescension, and tender pity, which the new character of Father implies, inspire us with hope, and embolden us to approach to his throne, and to present our requests.—The words, "in heaven," do not refer to the local residence of the Deity. If he were in heaven as created beings are in a place, the heavens would be greater in extent than he, and consequently he would be limited. Against the mistake into which the sound of the words might lead an ignorant person, it is not necessary to put those on their guard who have read in the Scriptures the sublime descriptions of the immensity of the Divine essence; and all that is incumbent upon us is, to inquire for what reason the infinite Creator is represented as in heaven. The common answer is the just one; that, as there must be a region of the universe in which he confers their full reward upon his holy creatures, he is said to be in it, because he there gives the highest manifestations of his goodness and glory. As it is a natural thought that this place is elevated above this terrestrial and the visible creation, we point upwards when we are speaking of the habitation of the Divinity, as our Saviour lifted up his eyes when he prayed, acting on that occasion under the influence of the ideas and feelings of a man.—This preliminary address is an appropriate introduction to the prayer which follows; for the contemplation of God as our Father, will give us an interest in his glory, which is the subject of the first petition, and will encourage us to ask the blessings which are mentioned in the other petitions.

The first petition is, "Hallowed," or sanctified, "be thy name;" in which the meaning of the two words, *name* and *sanctify*, must be ascertained. A

\* Mal. ii. 10.

name properly signifies the discriminative appellation of an individual; and in this sense our Father in heaven has different names, as Jehovah, God, Lord, &c. But the term is used in other significations, and particularly, I apprehend, denotes on some occasions God himself. As the Jews were wont to call him the Name of the heavens, and the Name, absolutely; so, when the Scripture calls us to give thanks to his name, it evidently calls us to give thanks to himself. In the present case, it is frequently explained to be, every thing whereby God makes himself known; but then the prayer, that every thing whereby he makes himself known may be sanctified or glorified, is not very intelligible. I think it therefore preferable, to consider the name of God in this place as signifying God himself, the idea of his being manifested to his creatures being necessarily implied in the petition. The word *ἁγιαζεν*, signifies to *make holy*; but this cannot be its meaning here; for we should either utter words to which we attached no idea, or express a sentiment full of impiety and blasphemy, if we prayed that God might be made holy. *Ἀγιαζεν*, signifies also to *separate from a common to a peculiar use*, and hence, also, to treat any thing with reverence as sacred. Now, as a person who is honoured is distinguished or separated from other persons, is the object of respect and homage, to sanctify, comes to be equivalent to glorify. The true sense, therefore, of the petition before us is, let God be glorified. The two words evidently convey the same meaning in the following passage: "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified."\* The petition, therefore, may be understood as a prayer that God would glorify himself, and that he would enable us and others to glorify him.

God has already glorified himself in the works of creation; and he continues to glorify himself in his dispensations of providence and grace. He glorifies himself when he performs such works as afford bright and impressive manifestations of his power, wisdom, goodness, justice, and holiness. To mention only one instance,—he is said to honour himself by executing vengeance upon sinners, whose daring crimes seemed to call for his interposition. The words lately quoted were spoken immediately after the death of Nadab and Abihu, who were destroyed by lightning from the oracle, because, in a state of intoxication as it would seem, they had offered strange fire in the sanctuary. In reference to the doom of Pharaoh and his army, who were drowned in the Red Sea, he said, "I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."† We therefore pray that God would give such manifestations of his glory in the course of events, as shall make man know that "he whose name alone is JEHOVAH, is the Most High God over all the earth."

If it is our duty to pray that God would glorify himself, it is undoubtedly incumbent upon us to pray also that we may be disposed and enabled to concur in this design, which is the ultimate end of our creation and redemption. We hallow his name, when we observe, and admire, and acknowledge the displays of his perfections in nature, and providence, and grace; when we elevate our minds and hearts to him, as the greatest, the holiest, the wisest, the best of all beings; when we worship him according to his own institution; when we speak to the honour of his character and dispensations, and vindicate them from the accusations of impiety, and when we cheerfully obey the precepts which prescribe the objects and the extent of our duty. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."‡ The Greek commentator Theophylact, thus briefly explains the petition: "Let thy name be sanctified; that is, make us holy, that thou mayest be glorified on our account. For as God is blasphemed, so he is sanctified, on my account; that is, is glorified as holy."

"Thy kingdom come." God, who is the Creator, is also the Lord of the

\* Lev. x. 3.

† Exod. xiv. 17.

‡ John xv. 8.



universe, and his kingdom of providence rules over all, and admits of no increase of power and dominion. The petition has no reference to it, because it would be absurd to pray that that may come, which is come already. But there is a kingdom which was announced in the Old Testament as future, and concerning which we have the following prophecy of Daniel: "In the days of these kings," that is, before the four great monarchies were ended, "the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."\* In the New Testament it is called the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of God; and this name is given to the dispensation of grace under the Messiah, which is carried on by the gospel and the institutions of our Saviour, and by the operations of the Holy Ghost. It also is already come. It commenced on the day of Pentecost, and has continued, amidst various vicissitudes, to the present hour; but, in its most prosperous state, it never was established except over a small portion of the earth. Besides, almost from the beginning, its strength has been impaired by internal divisions, and its glory obscured by manifold corruptions; and in not a few places it subsists only in name, and what is called the kingdom of Christ, should rather be considered as a province of the kingdom of darkness.

At the time when our Lord taught this prayer to his disciples, their notions of his kingdom were very imperfect; but he called upon them to pray for the propagation of his religion in the world, the conversion of Jews and Gentiles, and the universal reign of righteousness and truth. There are still valid reasons for continuing to present this petition. We do not yet see all things put under Christ. A great part of the world is subject to the dominion of his adversary, whom he was manifested to destroy. Heathenism spreads its deepest shades over many a wide and populous region; Mahometanism tramples on the cross in countries where his religion once flourished; Popery has degraded it into a profligate and contemptible superstition; and among those who profess a purer faith, there are comparatively few who honour him with the homage of their hearts. Ought we not, then, to pray that his kingdom may come? We are authorized by prophecy to look for a more glorious dispensation, when "the Spirit shall be poured out from on high, and the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;" for a time "when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." As the bold and magnificent language of prophecy may require a cautious and sober interpretation, it is uncertain whether the true religion will ever be strictly universal; and some obscure hints render it doubtful: but if the whole human race should, at a future period, be the faithful subjects of Christ, it would then be their duty, not to pray for the coming of his kingdom, but to rejoice because it had come. It should be remembered, that the event to which we should look forward, is not the general prevalence of a profession of his religion, but a cordial acceptance of it, accompanied with subjection to his laws and institutions; and consequently, that we ought to pray for the exertion of Divine power, by which only this great spiritual revolution will be effected. The kingdom of God comes when it is established in the heart.

Some have understood the kingdom to mean the second coming of Christ. "He who has a bold or assured conscience," says Theophylact, "will wish the resurrection and judgment to come." It is the character of believers, that they are looking for and hastening to the coming of the Lord; and when their faith is strong, they will say with the beloved disciple, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." I presume, however, that we have given the true sense of the pe-

\* Dan. ii. 44.

tion, when we have explained it as a prayer for the enlargement and prosperity of the Church.

The petition which is next in order, is closely connected with the coming of the kingdom of God; for when the gospel, by which it is advanced, is accompanied with Divine power, men are disposed and enabled to do the will of God. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Divines speak of the secret and the revealed will of God; but with the former we have nothing to do, and this petition respects the latter alone. It is his will made known to us as the rule of our conduct, by positive precepts, and by the dispensations of Providence. It is the duty of every man to submit to the appointments of heaven, to bear trials without murmuring, to be content with his condition; it is his duty to pay a sacred regard to all the commands of his Maker, and to perform with fidelity the various offices of piety, justice, and charity. There are several important ideas suggested by this petition:—that the will of God is the reason of obedience, or the foundation of morality; that it is a law to all men without exception; that it should be carefully studied by us, and kept constantly in view as the standard of our actions; that it is only by Divine assistance that we shall be enabled to obey it; and, that we should pray for grace to others as well as ourselves. The notion, that men possess a natural power to obey, as Pelagians affirm, or that they have all received sufficient grace, is contradictory to this petition, which manifestly supposes that we have no such power, and must therefore ask it from God.

In presenting this petition, we are directed to have in our eye the example of obedience exhibited by the inhabitants of heaven, or the angels of God, concerning whom it is said, that "they do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word."\* We cannot, indeed, hope to attain to equal perfection, but it should be our constant aim, and every endeavour should be used to make the nearest approach to it. The utmost which we can hope in the present state, is the perfection of sincerity, consisting in integrity of heart, and leading us to esteem the Divine precepts concerning all things to be right. If we are sincere, our obedience will resemble that of the angels in promptitude and cheerfulness. Not hesitating from fear of the consequences, nor retarded by the love of ease, and the interference of other demands, we will immediately and willingly comply with the calls of duty, like those blessed spirits, who, as soon as the command is given, fly, like the lightning, from heaven to earth, to execute his orders.

The next petition respects our temporal affairs: "Give us this day our daily bread." The word translated *bread*, is used both in Greek and in Hebrew, in its proper signification; but it is also put, by a figure, for the whole of our temporal provision, because bread is called in Scripture the staff of life, and among the eastern nations was a principle article of food. It is altogether fanciful to say,—what you have no doubt heard,—that the people of God should be content if they have only bread and water, because these only are contained in the promise, "His bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure."† Undoubtedly, they should be pleased with the scantiest portion which may be assigned to them; but they have better reasons for contentment than this or any similar promise. The interpretation may be called pious; but it is entitled to no other praise, and betrays ignorance of the rules according to which Scripture should be explained. Bread stands as a part for the whole, and denotes all the necessities of life; and our Church gives a more rational view of the petition, when it represents it as teaching us, to ask not a bare subsistence, but "a competent portion."

The true sense of the word translated *daily*, it is more difficult to settle. The Greek term is *επιούσιος*, concerning which Origen observes, that it was

\* Ps. ciii. 20.

† Is. xxxiii. 16.



not used by either the learned or the vulgar, and seems to have been formed by the Evangelists. There is, therefore, no resource left but etymology, which has guided Jerome in his translation, who calls it in Matthew *super-substantialis*, but in Luke *quotidianus*. Now, *super-substantialis* is a very literal version of *επιουσιος*, which is compounded of *επι*, upon, and *ουσια*, essence or substance. But such versions are the result of ignorance, and prove that the translator understands only the component parts of a word, but not the word itself. *Super-substantialis* is as unintelligible as *επιουσιος*, although it has been supposed to mean the bread of the Eucharist, a supposition utterly absurd. Some have thought that it is derived from the verb *επειμι*, which signifies to remain, to be after; and that *απρος επιουσιος* is our future bread, the bread of to-morrow. But the petition thus understood would sound harshly, "Give us this day," or, as in Luke, "Give us day by day the bread of the next day;" and seems not to be consistent with trust in God, and with our Saviour's exhortation not to take thought for the morrow. The word is not so explained by any of the ancients; and this sense is rejected by Origen, who mentions it only as a sense which might occur to some of his readers. *Απρος επιουσιος* is explained by Chrysostom and others, who were the most competent judges, to be bread which passes into the essence or substance of our bodies, bread which is sufficient for the preservation of our bodily substance; and they understand by it, not the luxuries and superfluities of life, but those things which are necessary for its support.\*

We are forbidden to seek high things, and if we are duly influenced by the glorious discoveries of the Gospel, we will feel a great degree of indifference to the enjoyments and splendours of the world. But daily bread is not to be confined to those things which are usually called the necessities of life. Even the phrase, the necessities of life, does not convey a definite idea, as the circumstances of individuals are so much diversified, and what is sufficient for one would be totally inadequate to the wants of another. God, who has placed man in different situations, has himself rendered a larger share of worldly good things necessary to a man of rank, for example, than to an obscure person, to the father of a numerous family than to him who is childless. Our Saviour has in his wisdom employed a general expression, which admits of considerable latitude of application, and authorises us to pray for sufficient bread, for a competent portion, for all that our station requires. The prayer of Agur will serve as a model, and will show us, that, although we should not presume to dictate to God, yet there are two extremes from which we may pray to be preserved, as there is danger to be apprehended from both. "Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."†

It is almost unnecessary to add, that this prayer does not supersede the use of means; for it is only in conforming to the established order of providence, that we ought to expect it to be answered. The prayer imports that our temporal blessings come from God, in whatever channel they may be communicated; that without his blessing our industry and foresight will prove unavailing; and that our dependence upon him is constant: and hence we are directed to present this petition, not at distant intervals, but from day to day. Even the rich man who thinks that he has goods laid up for many years, should ask his daily bread from God; for when it is in his hand, providence could snatch it from him, and scatter in an hour his wealth to the winds.

In the next petition we pray for the remission of sin: "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Our debts are our sins, and accordingly

\* Vide Wits, in *Symbolum Exercit. xi. de Pane Quotidiano*, § 10. † Prov. xxx. 7—9.

the latter word is used when the prayer is repeated in Luke. They are called our debts, because they formally consist in the non-payment of the obedience which we owed to God, or as some think, because the sinner has a debt of punishment to pay to divine justice. If our debts are our offences against God, it follows that our debtors are not those who owe us money, but those who have injured us in word and deed, and from whom we might think ourselves entitled to demand satisfaction.

It is unnecessary to inquire what is implied in the forgiving of our debts, as this important subject was explained in its proper place; and remission is well known to consist in our absolution from the sentence of condemnation pronounced upon us for our sins. Nor is there any occasion at present for showing that God alone can forgive sin, and that although no mention is made of the atonement of Christ, it must be understood to be referred to; agreeably to the uniform doctrine of Scripture, that it is solely for his sake that God bestows this blessing upon us. Waiving these points as not now demanding our attention, let us consider the subjoined condition or qualification, as it seems to be, with which our Lord has connected this petition: "As we forgive our debtors." And certainly no small difficulty here presents itself to those who hold the doctrine of justification by grace without any conditions. It does not appear easy to reconcile with that doctrine, this petition as expressed in Matthew, and still more strongly in Luke: "For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." Various attempts have been made to point out their harmony; but some of them have not been successful.

It has been said that our forgiving others is an evidence of the grace of God towards us, from which it appears, that we are not given up to our sinful affections, and his Spirit has not utterly departed from us, and that hence we may hope for new displays of his grace. It has also been said that our forgiving others must precede the sense of our own forgiveness, and that we cannot expect to experience joy and peace, if we do not exercise charity towards our brethren. But this reasoning shifts the state of the question, and supposes the person in whom this qualification is required, to have been already forgiven. It is a better solution of the difficulty, to represent the petition as containing an argument from the less to the greater, which may be thus stated:—"Our Father in heaven, if we whose goodness is so limited are so affected towards others as not unwillingly to pardon their offences, with how much confidence can we ask the same thing to ourselves from thee, whose benignity has neither measure nor bounds!" Our Lord reasons in a similar manner: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"\*

I have long thought that the difficulty may be more satisfactorily removed in a different way. There are two kinds of pardon,—legal pardon, and fatherly pardon; of which the one consists in the repeal of the curse of the law, or the sentence of condemnation; and the other, in the removal of the chastisements to which the children of God are subjected for their offences. The first is obtained by faith alone, without works, but the second is suspended upon conditions,—repentance, confession, prayer, and the performance of duty. Our Lord taught this prayer to his disciples, who were already in a state of grace; and it begins with an address to God as our Father, which supposes us to stand in the relation of children to him. It is the prayer of a believer, who, having been freely forgiven when he was justified, has still to ask the pardon of his daily offences. Now, that he may recover a comfortable sense of the love of God, and again enjoy the light of his countenance, it is necessary that he should be in a proper disposition of mind, and particularly

\* Luke xi. 11.



that he should be in a state of charity towards his brethren of mankind, and especially towards those who have offended him. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."\* By subjoining this qualification to the petition, our Lord reminds his disciples of the necessity of being placable and merciful, and encourages them, when they are conscious of this temper, to expect mercy from God. The petition points out the order, according to which God dispenses favours to his people. He will withdraw his chastening hand when they return to a sense of their duty. When they forgive others, he will forgive them.

If we take this view of the subject, the difficulty is removed. It is not the condition of their original pardon which is prescribed, but of the forgiveness of their subsequent failings and imperfections.

We cannot pray in sincerity for the pardon of sin, without feeling an abhorrence of it, and forming a resolution henceforth to renounce it. Our Saviour has therefore taught us to say in the next place, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Temptation signifies any thing which entices us to sin. It would be foreign to our present design, to inquire what are the various sources of temptation; but it is necessary to ascertain what is implied in not leading us into it. The expression has rather a strange sound, as it occurs in an address to God, and it seems to import that God might be actively concerned in tempting us, in direct contradiction to the following words: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."† It is certain that God may give permission to wicked spirits and bad men to tempt us, for there is no doubt that he could restrain them; that, in the course of his providence, he may place us in circumstances which have a tendency to stimulate our corrupt desires and passions; and that he may leave us to act according to the inclinations of our hearts. Thus far we may conceive him to lead us into temptation; but to suppose him to exert any direct influence to excite us to comply with it, would be to represent him as the author of sin. The words before us, and all similar expressions, ought to be explained consistently with the perfect purity of the Divine nature; and we should avoid all those metaphysical speculations concerning the agency of God in the actions of his creatures, which bewilder the mind, and lead us so far, that we can only escape the impious conclusion by retracting our own reasonings, and resting, where we should have always rested, in the incontrovertible truth, that "God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all." This petition, then, is expressive of two things; first, of a request, founded on a humble sense of our weakness and liability to err, that God would keep temptation at a distance from us; and, secondly, of a request that, if for wise reasons he shall be pleased to expose us to it, he would assist and strengthen us in the evil hour. It is a direct acknowledgment of our inability to preserve ourselves. Accordingly, we are directed farther to say, "Deliver us from evil;" signifying, that our own wisdom and resolution are insufficient, and that our only resource is the power of God. Evil is generally understood to be sin; but in the original, the article is prefixed to it—*ῥυσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπο τοῦ πονηροῦ*; which may be translated, *from the evil one*. It was generally so explained by the Fathers. The character of the evil one is justly given to the apostate spirit who was the first transgressor, and is continually soliciting others to transgress; and the description of him "as a roaring lion, that goes about seeking whom he may devour,"‡ shows the danger which we have reason to dread from him, and the urgent necessity of prayer that we may be preserved from his power. When Christians are exhorted to put on the whole armour of God,—the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet

\* Matth. vi. 14, 15.

† James i. 13.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 8.

of salvation, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit,—it is added, “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.”\*

The prayer is concluded with this doxology: “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.” It may be considered, not only as an ascription of praise to God, but as containing reasons or motives to encourage us to offer up the preceding petitions. The kingdom belongs to God; who is the Sovereign of the universe, and, having all things at his disposal, can bestow the blessings which we ask. The power belongs to him; and therefore no obstacle can prevent the accomplishment of his gracious designs. The glory belongs to him; and therefore we infer that he will grant our requests, because in the dispensations of his providence and grace his name will be glorified. To the whole prayer, the Hebrew word “Amen” is subjoined, which, in this connexion, is expressive of our desire, and of our confidence that we shall be heard.

It is proper to observe, that the genuineness of the doxology has been called in question by many learned men, and that it is supposed to be an interpolation transferred into the text from the ancient liturgies, in which it was used after the prayer was recited. It is remarked, that it is wanting in Luke, where this prayer is repeated, only with some unimportant alterations; but if the doxology is interpolated in Matthew, it is not easy to conceive why it has been left out in Luke, as it would have been as easy to introduce it in the one place as in the other. Its presence in the former Gospel, and its absence in the latter, seem rather to prove it to be genuine. It is not found in many manuscripts, in the writings of some of the Greek Fathers even when they professedly explain the Lord’s prayer, in several ancient versions, and in the Fathers of the Latin Church. On the other hand, there are several ancient versions in which it is found, and Greek and Latin writers by whom it is quoted and commented upon; and it is asserted also, that it appears in many manuscripts some of which are of high antiquity. Griesbach has ejected it from the text; but, although his authority is great, the discussions of some learned men have made some abatement from it, and shown us that we ought not implicitly to bow to his decisions. I do not pretend to determine a question, with respect to which the most eminent critics are divided in sentiment.

In this formulary, we have all the constituent parts of prayer. It begins and ends with adoration and thanksgiving; and it contains petitions for temporal and spiritual blessings, some of which obviously imply confession of our sinfulness and weakness. It is an admirable guide to us in our devotions; and prayers conformable to this pattern are acceptable to God, when they flow from a heart purified by faith. It is entitled to the highest respect, as a form to be occasionally used in public and private; and to lay piety out of the question, we could not say much for the modesty of the man who should presume to think that any prayer which he could compose would be better. Our Directory for Public Worship says, “Because the prayer which Christ taught his disciples is not only a pattern of prayer, but itself a most comprehensive prayer, we recommend it also to be used in the prayers of the church.”

\* Eph. vi. 18.



## LECTURE XCVI.

## ON THE CHURCH.

Different Meanings of the Term, Church.—Import of the Distinctions into the Visible and Invisible, Militant and Triumphant Church.—The Design of the Church.—The Qualification of its Members; Baptism, Knowledge, Faith, and a Credible Profession.—The Unity, Universality, Perpetuity, and Infallibility of the True Church.

THE design of God in the various dispensations of religion, has been to establish and uphold a society of a singular character, separated from the world, dedicated to his service, and distinguished by the high privileges conferred upon the members. As this society is the object of his special care, and it is in it that revelation is preserved, the ordinances of the true religion are administered, and the blessings of salvation are enjoyed, it is entitled to particular attention.

The name by which it is known among us is the Church, and this term is used as equivalent to the Hebrew word *קהל*, and the Greek word *ἐκκλησία*. As *קהל* signifies a congregation, or a number of persons gathered together, so this is the import of *ἐκκλησία*, which denoted, among the Greeks, an assembly of the people convoked by lawful authority. Accordingly, the former word is frequently translated by the latter in the Septuagint, and occurs likewise as its substitute in the New Testament. In the fortieth psalm, the Messiah says, "I have declared thy righteousness in the great congregation;" — *בקהל רב* — and the passage is thus quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, *ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας ἑμνήσω σε*; "In the midst of the church I will sing praise to thee."\* The Septuagint here employs the word *συναγωγή*.

The word *ἐκκλησία* bears a variety of senses, which either are found in Scripture, or have been since attached to it in the common language of Christians. It is not certain that it any where signifies, in the New Testament, the place of meeting for the worship of God, (see 1 Cor. xi. 22.) although it very early received this meaning by *metonymy*, according to which the thing containing is called by the name of that which it contains; and, in imitation of the ancients, we give the designation of churches to those houses in which Christians hold their religious assemblies. As it would serve no purpose to inquire whether there were any houses so denominated in the days of the Apostles, I proceed to observe, that the Church sometimes denotes a single family, or rather a few individuals associated together in observing the institutions of the Gospel. This appears from such passages as the following: "Greet the church that is in the house of Aquila and Priscilla." "Salute the church which is in the house of Nymphas."† It is highly probable that those churches consisted, not only of the children and servants belonging to the persons named, but of others, who, professing the faith, repaired to their houses at stated times to hear the word, and to unite in the exercises of prayer and praise. There is little reason to think that the primitive disciples had any other houses in which they might hold their conventicles, as they were an infant sect, and were surrounded with enemies, whose notice it would have been imprudent to attract by a public display. However few in number, they were encouraged to meet by the gracious promise of our Saviour, that "where two or three are met together in his name, he is in the midst of them."

Again, The Church signifies all the Christians in a particular city, whether they assembled for religious offices in one place, or in several places. This is

\* Heb. ii. 12.

† Rom. xvi. 5. Col. iv. 15.

plain from the following words: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers."\* All the disciples in that celebrated city were accounted one church; while it is beyond doubt that they were too many to form only one congregation. On this subject, indeed, there has been a diversity of opinion; and, in particular, Independents, have discovered an anxious wish to prove the negative, because the fact which I am stating is at variance with their notions of the constitution of a church. But let us attend to the language in which the sacred historian speaks of the success of the Gospel among its inhabitants: "And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord." "And it came to pass, that a whole year Saul and Barnabas assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people; and the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch."† When we consider that there were many converts before the arrival of Barnabas and Saul, and that they had laboured with success for a whole year prior to the time when the church is spoken of as one, it must be strong prejudice which leads any person to deny that the word is used as a general term comprehending several congregations; for it is altogether incredible that the disciples would have been called "a great number," and "much people," if they could have been convened in one house, and for the reason given above, probably a private house. In the same sense the word is used in reference to Jerusalem, all the disciples in which are repeatedly represented as one church.‡ But that there were more assemblies than one in that city is evident, not only from the number of converts specified in the Acts, many of whom might be strangers, who afterwards removed to different places; but from the fact that the Apostles continued a long time in it after the day of Pentecost, not surely to minister to a single society of believers; and that the poor were so numerous, that not one deacon, but seven, were appointed to take care of them. I have dwelt rather long upon this point; but as this application of the term has been contested, some discussion was necessary, and I have thus been led to anticipate an argument which will again be brought forward in favour of the form of church-government which we have adopted.

There is another sense of the term which is now common, but of which I do not find any example in the New Testament, namely, when it is employed to denote the inhabitants of a whole country united in the same religious profession. There we read of the churches of Judea, the churches of Galatia, the churches of Macedonia, the churches of Asia. We, in this country, speak of the Church of Scotland, the Church of England, the Church of Holland, &c. This phraseology has arisen from the connexion of the church with the state, in consequence of which, Christianity, or rather a particular modification of Christianity, is established by law in a particular country, and all the inhabitants are required to adopt it in that form, unless a toleration be granted to dissenters to worship God according to the dictates of their consciences. This has originated in an attempt to make Christianity a national affair, and to render the church commensurate with the territory over which the power of the civil government extends. It would lead us away from our present design, to enter upon the question concerning the lawfulness of civil establishments of religion. In general, we may say, that, so far as they blend together secular and spiritual things, interfere with religious liberty, and consider men as Christians, merely because they are subjects of the state, they are unscriptural, and must prove the source of manifold and grievous corruptions.

Farther, The word has been supposed to denote, not a whole religious society, but only the office-bearers in it. It has been considered as bearing this sense in the following words: "And if he shall neglect to hear thee, tell it to the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as

\* Acts xiii. 1.

† Acts xi. 21, 26.

‡ Ib. v. 11. viii. 1, 3. xi. 22. xii. 1, 5. &amp;c.



a heathen man, and a publican.”\* It is evident that the offending brother is to be brought before the church for judgment; and if he prove refractory, to be excommunicated. The power of government, Presbyterians affirm, is not vested in the people, but in those who preside over them; and consequently, if they are right, the church must here mean the ministers and rulers. Independents, of course, reject this interpretation; and some who differ from them in their views of church government, explain the words in a different manner. To settle this controversy, would require a train of circuitous reasoning, into which this is not the proper time to enter. I shall therefore pass over this sense of the term, and proceed to another, concerning which there is no dispute.

I observe, in the last place, that the church signifies all the disciples of Christ throughout the world. There are many examples of this extensive meaning of the term: “The church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.” “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.” “The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”† In these passages, the meaning of the term is more extensive than in any of the former instances, and comprehends all in every country, and in every age, who acknowledge Jesus Christ as their spiritual head.

In speaking of the church in this general view, it is necessary to consider it under two aspects, and to attend to the distinction which is commonly made of it into visible and invisible.

“The visible church,” says our Confession of Faith, “consist of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”‡ It comprehends, therefore, various sects, differing from each other in some particulars, but united in acknowledging the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the rule of faith and practice, and observing the ordinances of the gospel. The Church of England calls the visible church “a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered, according to Christ’s ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.”§ We may acquiesce in both definitions; but they are general, and particularly the first, so that we may find some difficulty in practically applying them, to ascertain who are the true members of this church. Some sects we must exclude, because they deny the fundamental articles of the Christian religion, as Unitarians do; but others hold a mixture of truth and error, and hence it may not be easy to determine whether they should be admitted for the truth, or rejected for the error. Again, if the visible church consists of those who profess the true religion, and is an assembly of faithful men, it follows that those who do not fall under this description,—men who are ignorant of the doctrines of religion, disregard its ordinances, and openly transgress its laws,—cannot be considered as belonging to it. However contradictory, therefore, may be the practice of the two churches of Scotland and England, the creed of neither encourages the idea of national Christianity, or of holding every person who is born in a particular country to be a member of the church, merely because he has been baptized by it, and is living within its bounds. The phrase, the visible church, is used very loosely by us all; but, if we would speak scripturally, and even rationally, we would not include in it the grossly ignorant and openly profane, any more than heathens and Mahometans; for the former are as little connected with Jesus Christ, even in outward appearance, as the latter. We would comprehend in the visible church none but those who make a credible profession of religion; that is, none but persons who possess a competent knowledge of its doctrines, observe its institutions,

\* Matth. xviii. 17. † Acts xx. 28. Eph. v. 25. 1 Tim. iii. 15. ‡ Conf. xxv. 2. § Art. xix

and regulate their conduct by its laws. Were this mode of settling its limits adopted, they would be very much narrowed, and a great part of what is called the Christian world would be left without its pale.

This church is called visible, not only because the persons who compose it are not angels or separate spirits, but men dwelling in mortal flesh, but because, as a society, it falls under the observation of our senses. The members are known; their assemblies are public; we may be present in them, and observe the celebration of the several parts of their worship. It is distinguishable, like any other society; and we can say, Here is the church of Christ; but there is the church of the Jews or of the Mahometans. Nothing more is necessary to discover it than the use of our senses. Having learned, by the perusal of the Scriptures, what are the discriminating characters of the church, wherever we perceive a society whose creed and observances are upon the whole conformable to this pattern, we are authorized to say, This is the church, or rather, a part of the church.

"The invisible church," I again quote the words of our Confession, "consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."\* This is a definition of the church for which Christ gave himself; for he died for all who were chosen in him to salvation; but not an accurate definition of the invisible church as actually existing, in which not all the elect are comprehended, but those only who have believed. I consider the invisible church to be the congregation of those who have been called by Divine grace into the fellowship of the gospel, and sanctified by the truth; and they are one congregation, because, however distant in place and diversified in circumstances, they are united by closer bonds than those of external communion. "By one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into that one Spirit."† In the visible church there is a mixture of saints and sinners, as there is of chaff and grain in the barn-floor, and of wheat and tares in the field; but this society is pure; not that the individuals who compose it are free from sin, but that they are all of one description, having been born from above. This is the true church, in which God dwells, and to which the promises are made. This is the body of Christ, to which he communicates spiritual influences, that it may "increase with the increase of God."

This church is said to be invisible, because it cannot be discovered by the eye. It is not separated from the world in respect of place, but of state. It lies hidden in the visible church, from which it cannot be certainly distinguished. The qualifications of its members are internal; their faith and love are not the objects of sense. Towards our fellow men we can exercise only the judgment of charity, founded on probable grounds; but we are liable to err, and from various causes may suppose saints to be hypocrites, and hypocrites to be saints. It is unseen by every eye but that which "searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men." "The Lord," and he only, "knows them that are his."

Hitherto I have spoken of the Church as subsisting exclusively upon earth; but there is another distinction which relates to it, as subsisting both on earth and in heaven. Taken in this comprehensive sense, it is divided into the church militant, and the church triumphant. The former comprehends those who are engaged in the spiritual warfare, wrestling against principalities and powers, struggling with the flesh and the solicitations of the world, and, in some cases, resisting even unto blood in their opposition to sin. The latter is made up of the glorified saints, who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and

\* Conf. xxv. 1.

† 1 Cor. xii. 13.



the word of their testimony, and have obtained the crown of life which fades not away. Let it be observed, that these constitute only one church, one family in heaven and on earth, being subject to the same Head, animated by the same spirit, and, notwithstanding their distance, holding holy communion, while they take an interest in one another's joys and sorrows, and unite in the worship of Him who sits upon the throne, and of the Lamb.

The design of the establishment of the church will be explained by the following particulars. First, It is appointed to be the depository of divine truth, in which it should be preserved, and by which it should be published to the world. To the Jews were committed the oracles of God in ancient times; but the custody of them is now transferred to the Christian church. Hence it is called, in a passage formerly quoted, "the pillar and ground of the truth." Secondly, It is an important part of its duty, to maintain and observe the ordinances of Christ, that the ends of their institution may be accomplished in the salvation of men, and He may receive due honour, as the exalted Lord to whom every knee should bow of things on earth. Thirdly, It is intended to be the asylum of sinners, who are called upon to leave the society of the world, and to enter into it by faith, that they may escape the destruction which is coming upon the wicked. It is like the cities of refuge in the promised land, into which the man-slayer fled from the pursuit of the avenger of blood. Lastly, It is the nursery of the saints, in which they are trained for the duties of the present life and the happiness of the next, by spiritual instruction and watchful superintendence, by doctrine and discipline.

From the general remarks which have been already made, it has appeared who are the members of the church considered both as visible and as invisible. With respect to the latter, it is unnecessary to say any thing farther, as there can be no doubt that the members are believers, regenerated persons, saints, since the Scripture says expressly, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."\* But concerning the qualifications of the members of the visible church, it will be proper to enter into a more particular discussion.

First, An indispensable qualification of the members of the visible church is baptism, which has been called the initiatory seal of the new covenant, and is the rite by which our admission into the society of the faithful is declared. When Jesus Christ sent his Apostles to establish his church upon earth, he said to them, "Go ye therefore and teach," or rather, make disciples of "all nations"—*μαθητευσατε παντα τα εθνη*—"baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."† They were to be made disciples by baptism; not that the simple administration of this rite would constitute them such, or that it was to be administered to all who should come in the way of the Apostles, but that when they found persons who, having heard the gospel, professed faith in Christ, they should baptize them, and in this manner receive them into the number of his followers. As the uncircumcised were not admitted into the congregation of Israel, so the unbaptized have no right to enter into the church. In this respect the two ordinances resemble each other, that both were instituted as a preliminary step to the enjoyment of the other privileges of the people of God. It does not however follow, that baptism is necessary to salvation; for we may conceive a case, and it has actually happened, that a man has by some means—for example, by the perusal of the Scriptures—been savingly enlightened, who, at the same time, was in such a situation that he could not obtain the external sign of the righteousness of faith. There is no doubt that such a man went to heaven at death, and that he was a member of the invisible church, which is united to its exalted Head by the Spirit; but of the visible church, he was not a member, be-

\* Rom. viii. 9.

† Matth. xxviii. 19.

cause he wanted, yet without any fault on his part, the distinguishing badge of Christianity. Hence you perceive the reason that our Confession expresses itself with some degree of caution, when it says, that "out of the visible church there is no *ordinary* possibility of salvation." There is a possibility of salvation without its pale; but the cases are extraordinary, and such as those to which I have just now referred. When men have access to the church, they are bound by the highest authority to enter into its communion, and therefore to submit to baptism, which is the door of admission. If any person, knowing baptism to be an ordinance of Christ, should deliberately and contemptuously neglect it, he would no more be a disciple of Christ than a heathen or a Mahometan, and his final salvation would be as impossible as if he had lived and died in the habitual violation of any moral precept.

The second qualification of the members of the church, is knowledge; for Jesus Christ does not want blind followers, who are attached to him merely for his name, or in consequence of their local situation; and the ignorant are utterly incapable of performing the duties incumbent upon the members of this spiritual society. What degree of knowledge is requisite, it is not easy to determine with accuracy. Men differ much in education, in talents, in opportunities, so that it would be equally absurd to demand the same proficiency in all the candidates, as to insist that they should be all of the same stature. But unless a person know something about his own natural character and state, something about the person, and office, and work of the Saviour, something about the promises of God and the duties of a Christian, he cannot make a rational profession of faith, and consequently ought not to be admitted. The Church of Rome requires implicit faith in the members. This does not mean, as you might suppose from the terms, a belief of certain doctrines simply upon the authority of the church, but something much more mysterious, and of which the world never had an idea till it was revealed by the Schoolmen. Implicit faith is a belief that all the doctrines held by the church are true, although you know nothing about them, and never so much as heard them mentioned. It matters not to you what the church believes, and you need not give yourself the trouble to inquire; if you believe that all that she believes is agreeable to truth, you are an orthodox Christian, and are sure to go to heaven. In short, the Church of Rome teaches men to believe by proxy, to have faith without having one idea of the object of faith, to assent to a creed of which they know as little as the inhabitants of Tartary. Such a faith is very suitable to a church which holds that ignorance is the mother of devotion; but would ill accord with the church of Christ, which proposes its creed to be read and studied by all, invites and encourages inquiry, and demands from men a rational service. Those are commended who, like the Bereans, search the Scriptures daily, with a view to ascertain whether the doctrines proposed to them are true; and every member is called upon to be always ready to give "a reason of the hope which is in him, to any man who asks him."

The standard by which the knowledge of those who seek admission into the church should be tried, is the Scriptures. But the several churches of Christendom have adopted, besides the Scriptures, what have been called subordinate standards,—creeds, articles, and confessions. At first it may seem that this is an unwarrantable addition, and derogates from the perfection and permanent authority of the word of God; but their conduct admits of a satisfactory explanation. In the first place, They profess—and this is true at least of Protestant churches—to exhibit in their creeds only the doctrines of Scripture, and to exclude all human dogmas. But if this is a fair representation of the design of their creeds, it may be said that they are of no use, as the Scriptures contain all that they tell us. In answer to this objection, I observe, in the second place, That they are necessary for the defence of the truth against



heresies and errors. The authors of these profess great reverence for the Scriptures, and are ready at any time to give an account of their faith couched in their language, while they affix to it a sense totally different from that which you understand it to convey. Hence arose the necessity of employing a test to ascertain their real sentiments; and such a test is a creed expressed in human words, which established usage has rendered definite and incapable of perversion. This is a short account of the origin of creeds; and those who exclaim most vehemently against them, are the causes of the evil of which they complain.

When churches employ their subordinate standards as a test of religious sentiments, their reason is not that they consider them as having any authority in themselves, but that they appear to them to be founded on Scripture, and proper therefore to be used as a means of discovering the real sentiments of those who are desirous to be received into their fellowship. It is evident, however, that if the assent of private members is to be required to them, they ought to be very short and simple; and some modern creeds, however excellent, are too copious, and involve too many intricate points, to be fit for this purpose.

I might add as a third qualification of the members of the church, a profession of faith; for it is not the simple possession of knowledge which entitles any man to be admitted into its communion, but a declaration, explicit or implied, that he believes the doctrines in which he has been instructed, acknowledges Jesus Christ as his Saviour, submits to his authority, and is resolved to yield obedience to his laws and institutions. This profession is made by adults at their baptism, and by those who were baptized in infancy, by their attendance upon the ordinances of religion, and by the answers returned to the questions proposed to them when they apply for admission to the Lord's table.

The last qualification which I shall mention, is a character which shall give credibility to this profession. If men profess to know God, but deny him in works, their conduct neutralizes their profession, and it is no breach of charity to consider it as insincere. Of faith as it exists in the heart, we can have no knowledge but by external signs, which are to be sought for in the practice; because the truths of religion, when believed, do not remain as an intellectual treasure in the understanding; but exerting their power upon the heart, give rise to a conduct becoming the gospel. Our Lord has laid down a rule to direct us in our private and public judgments of our brethren, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."\* All Christians might be expected to agree, that into a society founded by Jesus Christ, and dedicated to his service, those should not be permitted to enter, who show, by their disregard of piety and their unholy actions, that whatever they pretend, they are hostile to his religion; and that a church is criminally negligent, and guilty of a violation of her trust, which lays open her fellowship to the profane and worldly. The members of the primitive church are addressed as "saints," and "faithful in Christ Jesus," and were so called perhaps, because the majority were truly entitled to this appellation, or at least because they were saints in appearance. There were great irregularities in that church; but these were unavoidable in a society, all the members of which were imperfect, and into which some unworthy persons had intruded under the mask of hypocrisy. They were not however allowed, and discipline was employed to correct them, and to expel those who refused to be reformed.

From the account which has been given of the necessary qualifications for admission into the visible church, it follows that it is not regeneration by the Spirit which is an indispensable pre-requisite, but the appearance of it; and

\* Matth. vii. 16, 17.

after all that can be said upon the subject, in this the greatest zealots for purity of communion must virtually acquiesce. It is certain, that God has not given the church authority to scrutinize the hearts of candidates, because he has not furnished the means. The gift of discerning spirits has long since ceased, and the present rulers of the church can judge only by profession and practice. To attempt to penetrate into the recesses of the soul, is to erect an inquisitorial tribunal for the trial of men's spiritual state; and as long as there are hypocrisy and self-deceit in the world, the sentences pronounced from it will be often exceedingly unjust. The Apostles appear to have received disciples upon such a profession of faith as we require from our applicants; and although it is manifest from the New Testament, that there were unregenerated persons in the primitive church, we do not find that they thought of expelling them on this ground, if they were free from scandalous crimes. Without regeneration, however, we readily acknowledge external connexion with the visible church will be of no avail, "for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."\*

In the sequel of this lecture, I shall direct your attention to some general characters or properties of the church.

The first is its unity. It is one church, and must be so called, whether we consider it as invisible or visible. With regard to the former there is no doubt, as all its members are united to Jesus Christ as their head, animated by the Spirit of holiness, and thus compacted into one body. The unity may not be so obvious with respect to the latter, because it is divided into different societies, not only distinct in place, but also disjoined by the peculiarity of their tenets and usages. But the appearance of disunion will be diminished, if we attend to what was formerly hinted, that although the designation of the visible church is employed in common language with great latitude, yet we cannot rationally and scripturally comprehend in it any society, which does not profess the true religion in its essential parts. We thus exclude heretical sects, and recognize as the constituent members, those only who acknowledge "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." These we account one on the ground of the fundamental points in which they agree, and do not consider the unity as destroyed by the minor point in which they disagree. Particular churches would do well to look upon themselves only as integral parts, and not as the whole. The latter idea is too much encouraged by the illiberal views and high pretensions of some parties. In certain cases it is avowed; and thus, while certain societies appropriate the name and privileges of the church, to the exclusion of all others, they prove themselves to be no part of it at all, but are self-excommunicated, cut off by their own act from all interest in the body of Christ.

The second character of the Church is its universality. It is the catholic church; and this epithet is explained by the Fathers to mean that it extends throughout the world, reaches from one end of the earth to another, as a body, says Theophylact, consisting of the churches every where, having Christ as its head. It is called Catholic, to signify that it is not confined to a particular country or sect, but comprehends all who profess the true religion, and observe the ordinances of the gospel. It is not Catholic *de facto*, if we mean by this word *universally diffused*; for we know that there are extensive regions and populous nations in which it has not been established, or claims only a very few of the inhabitants. The whole number of nominal Christians amounts only to a fifth or a sixth part of the human race. But it is Catholic *de jure*, because "the heathen have been given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." His commission authorized the Apostles and their successors to preach the gospel to every creature; and

\* Gal. v. 6.



the sense in which we understand prophecy, encourages us to hope that in a future age, the light of truth, like that of the sun, will illuminate every region; that the whole world will be converted into a temple, and all its inhabitants will be worshippers of the living God. The claims of the church of Rome to be the Catholic Church are well known, and to every man who understands the Scriptures, they appear equally presumptuous and ridiculous. Their arrogant style is too much imitated by some Protestants. In the southern part of the Island, the cry of "the Church," "the Church," is raised by proud, intolerant, uncharitable men, who appropriate this name to their own society, and pronounce all who do not submit to the government of bishops, to be schismatics and sectarians, who have no hope of salvation but through the un-covenanted mercy of God. But "we have not so learned Christ." We acknowledge as a part of the church "every congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly administered."

The third character of the church is its perpetuity. The declarations and promises concerning Zion, that God would establish it, and that it should be his rest for ever, are fulfilled in that society of which it was a figure. We believe upon the best authority, that as the church has subsisted from its erection to the present hour, so it will continue through all subsequent ages, till the second coming of Christ. "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;"\* neither death, which is daily making havock among the members, and is probably meant by the gates of Hades, nor the powers of darkness, as the words in our translation seem to import. In the most degenerate times God has had a seed to serve him, a remnant has been saved; as in the days of Elijah, who supposed himself to be the sole worshipper of God, while there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. There has always, too, been a visible profession of Christianity; there have been assemblies held, in which its forms of worship have been observed; and although many of these have been so corrupt, that they might rather have been considered as synagogues of Satan, yet even during the reign of Antichrist, it appears that in some corner or other of Christendom, there were men enlightened by divine grace, who escaped the general pollution, and maintained the truth at the peril of their lives.

With the perpetuity of the church, is intimately connected the question concerning its infallibility. It is one of the principal points of discussion between Protestants and Papists. The latter strenuously maintain that the church cannot err; and appropriating this prerogative to their own church, they call upon all men, under the pain of damnation, to submit to its authority. In settling the point to which this infallibility extends, they differ among themselves; but all agree that it is lodged somewhere in the church, in the Pope, or in a general council, or in both united. The doctrine of Protestants is stated in our Confession of Faith, in the following passages. "All synods or councils since the Apostles' time, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred." "The purest churches upon earth are subject both to mixture and error, and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan."† These assertions it would be easy to support, both by reasoning from Scripture, and by an appeal to the history of religion in the ages which are past. We believe that infallibility can be predicated of no assembly, however learned, of no association of professed Christians, and still less of any individual, although dignified with the high title of the vicegerent of Christ. Still, there is a sense in which the church may be said to be infallible, and must be considered as such, if we hold its perpetuity. The true faith can never be utterly lost, because, if such a calamity could take place, the church

\* Matth. xvi. 18.

† Conf. xxxi. 4. xxv. 5.

would be annihilated. The truth will be known and professed by some society or other, greater or less, in all generations, and all the true members of the church are under the unerring guidance of the Spirit; so that, although they may mistake in some points, and be for a time seduced by temptation, they shall not totally and finally apostatize. This view of the matter does not in any degree favour the pretensions of the Church of Rome, or secure the faith of one society more than that of another. It is applicable to no particular church, and merely affirms that, however widely error may be diffused, and whatever desolation persecution may work, the power of Jesus Christ will preserve his own religion, and raise up some persons to profess it.

## LECTURE XCVII.

## ON THE CHURCH.

True Nature of Schism.—Separation, when Justifiable.—Government of the Church.—Different Opinions Respecting it.—Popish Form.—Assumptions on which it is Founded, Examined and Disproved.—Episcopacy.—Examination of the Arguments in its Favour.—Proof that Presbyters and Bishops are of the same Order.

It is the duty of the members of the church to dwell together as brethren in unity. Many arguments are employed in Scripture to inculcate mutual love; but there is one derived, in particular, from the connexion which subsists between them as parts of a whole: “God,” says Paul, “has tempered the human body together, that there should be no schism in it, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now,” he adds, “ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular;”\* applying this illustration to the church, and signifying that the members should sympathize with each other.

Opposed to this love, which should characterize the disciples of Christ, is schism; an evil which is highly detrimental to the interests of religion, and of which it is the more necessary to take notice, because its true nature has been often misunderstood. In common language, it signifies an open division among Christians; and they are called schismatics who have withdrawn from the communion of a church, and formed themselves into a separate party. Dr. Campbell, in his Preliminary Dissertations,† has explained the scriptural sense of the term. His view of it, however, is not new, but had been adopted long before him by many writers, who had accurately examined its import. The Apostle Paul uses the word to denote an internal division in the church, arising from alienation of affection. Hence he says to the Corinthians, “Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that there be no schisms among you.”‡ He addressed this earnest exhortation to them, not so much to prevent the evil, as to suppress it, for he knew that it already existed: “When ye come together in the church, I hear that there are schisms among you, and I partly believe it.”§ As he exhorts them, at the same time, to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, he intimates that their schisms proceeded from a difference of sentiment; and it is cer-

\* 1 Cor. xii. 24—27.

† Diss. ix. p. 3.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 10.

§ Ib. xi. 18.



tain that, if men were agreed in all their views, the utmost harmony would prevail. But, whatever is the cause, schism itself consists in the want of love among the members of the church, and may exist in full force while there is no visible breach in their external communion. If, in a church, there are two parties who meet in the same places of worship, and are subject to the same rulers, but, at the same time, are actuated by mutual jealousy, and are secretly endeavouring to counteract and undermine each other; in that church there is a schism. United in their sentiments respecting articles of faith and modes of worship, Christians may be divided about matters of inferior moment, as we too often see the peace of congregations disturbed, and hostile parties formed, about the management of their temporal affairs, or the election of a minister, or some point much more insignificant. The schism in the Church of Corinth originated in the preference of one minister to another; while one said, "I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, and a third, I am of Cephas."\* In all such cases a schism exists, because that love is wanting, without which a society of professed Christians is not one body, but a number of parts in juxtaposition, or a chaos of discordant elements.

Let us proceed to speak of separation from a church. Now the question, whether in any case it is lawful, relates to a particular, not to the universal church; for to separate from the latter, would be to renounce Christianity, and to excommunicate ourselves from Jesus Christ himself. There have been individuals so situated, that they could not hold fellowship with any society of Christians; but they considered themselves as still belonging to the true church, and were ready to unite themselves visibly to it as soon as they should enjoy an opportunity. A total separation from it takes place in cases of apostasy, as when a person, who had been baptized, becomes an Infidel, a Jew, a Mahometan, or a Heathen. It is, therefore, only concerning the lawfulness of separation from a particular church, that there is any room for discussion. I begin with observing, that no particular church has a claim, distinct from the truth of its principles, upon any man to enter into its communion, rather than into that of any other church which is equally pure. He may have been baptized by its ministers; but as the sacraments are not badges of a party, but belong to the whole body of Christians, he must be considered as having been baptized into the communion of the Catholic Church. His accession to a particular church, when he has arrived at the age of maturity, ought to be the result of a serious examination whether its creed accords with the infallible standard. When he has found such a church, he ought not to withdraw from it upon light grounds; and nothing is more unbecoming the Christian profession, than the conduct of those who run from one society to another, from restlessness of temper, or in resentment of some occasional offence which has arisen, not from the fault of the church, but from the imprudence of some individual. There is not, however, a greater absurdity, than to suppose that, when a man has connected himself with a church, he should remain in it, whatever may be its errors in doctrine, and corruption in practice. Many reason in this manner, and none are more apt to do so than the members of an established church, in whose eyes its connexion with the state gives it a sacredness and an authority which do not seem to belong to other denominations. But this is merely an adventitious circumstance, and prejudice being laid aside, an established church, considered simply as a religious society, will appear to every person, who judges according to sound reason, to be exactly on a level in respect of its spiritual claims with the sects which exist in its vicinity. That man has a very faint idea of his duty to Jesus Christ, who imagines that he is bound to continue in a church which is corrupt in doctrine, superstitious in worship, tyrannical in government, and, by the relaxation, or total neglect of discipline, profanes

\* 1 Cor. i. 12.

its privileges by extending them to the unholy, and converts itself into a worldly society. It is not, however, every thing exceptionable in the order and proceedings of a church which will justify us in forsaking it. Those who acknowledge that men are imperfect, are not very consistent in expecting perfection in any association made up of such fallible materials. Even great corruptions will not authorize us to separate, till means have been used to remedy them; but, when every endeavour has failed, and the prevailing party are determined to persist, no enlightened Christian can be at a loss with respect to his duty. He must listen to the voice of conscience; he must obey God rather than men. He may be stigmatized as a separatist and a schismatic; but he is guiltless in the sight of God, and those alone are responsible for the consequences, who have laid him under the necessity of maintaining, in this manner, his fidelity to Christ. It is a consolation to know that he is still in the church of the living God, which is not circumscribed by legal boundaries, and is independent of acts of the legislature, and the patronage of the great.

To the constitution of any society, laws are necessary, and persons appointed to execute them; a number of individuals without government are a disorderly crowd. As Jesus Christ has founded his church to be the seat of love, and peace, and holy order, it may be presumed that he has given direction concerning the manner in which its affairs should be conducted. As we learn from the Scriptures, what office-bearers he has instituted, and what laws he has given to regulate the conduct of individuals, it is natural to expect that we shall receive some information from them with regard to the form which this spiritual society should sustain, and the power which should be exercised for the settlement of its concerns. Some have supposed that the government of the church is ambulatory; by which they mean, that no precise form has been prescribed, and that it is left to the wisdom of men to vary the form according to circumstances; to adapt it to the genius, and habits, and civil constitution of different nations. This is a summary mode of terminating all disputes about the subject. Nothing more is necessary than the exercise of political wisdom, accompanied with due care that the arrangements which are made may be Christian in their general character, and may not interfere with any of the acknowledged purposes which a church is intended to serve. Episcopacy will be the proper form in one country, Presbytery in another, and Independency in a third. The first will accord best with a monarchical government in the state, and the two latter with a republic.

Although this opinion has found many patrons, yet most Christians are disposed to think that a particular form of government was appointed by Christ and his Apostles; which consequently is of Divine right, ought to be adopted in all countries, and preserved inviolate to the end of the world. Hence Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Independents, advance a claim of preference in favour of their respective models; and the controversy has been carried on with great warmth, and not always with a Christian temper. It is argued that, if no human society can subsist without government, it is incredible that Jesus Christ, to whom the care of the church is committed, should have left it without this necessary provision for its welfare; that human wisdom was not competent to supply this defect, because it is apt to err even in temporal affairs, and still more in those of a spiritual nature, and experience shows what horrible corruptions it has introduced under various pretexts; that, when the ends of church government are considered, it was evidently of the utmost importance that specific directions should be given, as the credit of religion, the advancement of piety and holiness, the encouragement of the good, and the restraint of the bad, so much depend upon the due administration of it; that a form of government was as necessary to the Christian, as it was to the Jewish Church: and we



cannot reasonably suppose that, while the government of the latter was so exactly delineated, that of the former has been totally neglected.

It is hazardous and presumptuous to reason *a priori* concerning what God ought to have done, and hence to infer what he has actually done. This is a speculation too high for us; it is arrogant in short-sighted mortals, to point out the line of conduct which it behoved an infinite Being to pursue. Yet some have ventured to introduce *a priori* argument on the subject of Church government, and to say, that certainly the wisdom of our Saviour would lead him to do what seemed proper to them. At the same time, it cannot be denied that there is considerable force in the arguments mentioned above, particularly in that taken from the constitution of the Jewish Church; and on these grounds, most Christians believe that there may be found in the Scriptures the outlines of a plan for the government of that spiritual society, over which Jesus Christ presides as Lord and King.

There is no point, however, about which Christians are more divided in sentiment; and this diversity may be owing partly to prejudices of various kinds, and partly to the fact, which none but furious zealots will deny, that the form of government is not so fully and explicitly taught in Scripture, as the fundamental articles of faith, and the great duties of morality. The three forms of government which it is necessary to discuss, are the Episcopalian, the Independent, and the Presbyterian; but before we enter upon these, we must turn our attention for a little to the Church of Rome.

Papists affirm that there is a visible head of the Church upon earth, and that this dignity is assigned to the bishop of Rome; that he is properly the only bishop by Divine right, the whole episcopate being vested in him, and from him all other bishops derive their authority; that he has dominion over the whole Christian world; that all Christians are bound to submit to him, and that those who refuse to do so are heretics, and are exposed to eternal damnation; and that he possesses this supreme and uncontrolled power as the successor of Peter, who was bishop of Rome, and at his death left all his authority and prerogatives to his successors in that See. There are disputes among Roman Catholics, whether infallibility is lodged in the Pope or in a general council? and whether the Pope is superior to a council, or a council to the Pope? but they all acknowledge him to be the universal bishop, and the vice gerent of Christ.

Three points are assumed as the foundation of these extravagant claims; the supremacy of Peter, his residence in Rome in the character of its bishop, and the transmission of his power to those who occupy the same station.

With respect to the supremacy of Peter, it is founded, as Papists allege, upon the pre-eminence which is given to him in the evangelical history, and upon some things which our Lord said to him in particular. I shall take notice only of the principal passage: "I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;"\* which is applied without hesitation to the person of Peter. There is indeed an allusion to his name, which, both in Syriac and in Greek, signifies *a stone*; but it is questionable whether any thing more was intended. You will observe that there is a slight change in the original—*Σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν*. Had he said, *ἐπὶ σοὶ οἰκοδομήσω*, or, *ἐπὶ τούτῳ τῷ πέτρῳ οἰκοδομήσω*, the inference which Papists draw would have seemed to be more legitimate; but as the words are studiously varied—the one, *πέτρος*, being in the masculine, and the other, *πέτρα*, in the feminine gender,—there is reason to believe that our Lord merely alluded to his name; and that *the Rock* is either Christ himself, or the confession which Peter had made, that he is the Messiah, and the Son of the living God; for those are the truths

\* Matth. xvi. 18.

upon which the Christian religion and the faith of the church are founded. In this sense the words have been understood by some learned and distinguished members of the Church of Rome, bishops, archbishops, and cardinals; who have honestly acknowledged that Christ alone is the Rock, and that it is absurd to interpret it of a man who, like Peter, was subject to infirmity. It is indeed added, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." But the same words were used on another occasion, when our Lord was speaking to all the Apostles,\* and consequently they do not imply any thing peculiar to Peter; and after his resurrection he gave them all equal authority, when he breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."† As, however, the words were addressed in the first instance to Peter, and to him alone, some Protestants are disposed to admit that they import something peculiar,—not a superiority to his brethren, but a priority in the order of ministration; and think that the keys of the kingdom of heaven were said to be given to him in particular, because Jesus Christ had destined him to be the person who should open the kingdom, to the Jews by preaching to them on the day of Pentecost, and to the Gentiles by preaching to Cornelius.

We do not find that the supremacy of Peter was acknowledged by his contemporaries. It rather appears that it was utterly unknown to them, and that he is indebted for his exaltation above the other Apostles to the ignorant and superstitious veneration of posterity. He is indeed mentioned first on the day of Pentecost, when we are informed that he stood up with the eleven; but as the ardour of his temper had already impelled him frequently to come forward, and sometimes not much to his honour, so now, when it was under better direction, it would still lead him to take the precedence of his brethren in the performance of his duty. Besides, it is probable that he was the oldest of the company, and would on this account be the spokesman of the rest. Paul seems to have been ignorant of the pretended supremacy of Peter, when he says, that he himself was "not a whit behind the very chiefeest Apostles;"‡ for if he had ever heard of it, he would not have presumed to place himself upon a level with Peter; and, when comparing himself with the other Apostles, would have excepted him. He did not acknowledge his superiority at Antioch, where he "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed"§ for symbolizing with the Jews, from an unmanly fear of certain persons who had come from Jerusalem. And the brethren of Jerusalem were far from submitting to him implicitly as the sovereign pontiff of the church, whose decisions should be received by all Christians with profound respect, when they contended with him after he had preached to Cornelius, and demanded an account of his conduct.¶

Having seen that the supremacy of Peter has no foundation in Scripture, let us inquire, Whether there is any proof that he was bishop of Rome? Some of the ancients asserted, and Papists firmly believe, that he was first bishop of Antioch, and afterwards removed to Rome, where he continued till his martyrdom, during the space of five-and-twenty years. Few of his pretended successors have equalled him in the length of his reign; and as those who are elected are commonly advanced in life, it is customary to say at the installation of a Pope, *Sancte pater, non videbis annos Petri*. I remark, in the first place, That it is absurd to suppose an Apostle to have been a bishop, because constant residence in any particular place was contrary to the nature and design of his office. The Apostles were appointed "to be witnesses to

\* Matth. xviii. 18.

§ Gal. ii. 11.

† John xx. 22, 23.

¶ Acts xi. 2.

‡ 2 Cor. xi. 5.



Christ in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”\* They were given to the church at large; and would have been guilty of a violation of duty if they had appropriated their labours to a particular part of it. Peter is degraded by the supposition, that from being an Apostle he became bishop of Rome, unless he was also constituted the visible head of the church; but we have seen that the Scripture gives no countenance to his pretended supremacy. I remark, in the second place, That there is no satisfactory evidence that he was bishop of Rome. He is indeed called so by Eusebius, who wrote in the fourth century; and the oldest writer who is said to have asserted it, lived a hundred years after the death of the Apostle. But in a case of so much importance, it is not human testimony, however explicit, which would suffice, and far less uncertain traditions and doubtful arguments. If Jesus Christ did appoint him bishop of Rome and head of his church upon earth, and if it was his intention that all the subsequent bishops of that city should succeed him in his high prerogatives, and Christians should look up to them as their guides and governors, we might reasonably expect that the fact upon which the mighty superstructure is reared, would be clearly delivered in Scripture. On this subject, however, it preserves profound silence. Papists appeal to a verse in the first Epistle of Peter, which says, “The church that is at Babylon saluteth you;”† and affirm that this is Rome, because it is so called in the Revelation of John, and, consequently, that Peter was there when he wrote. But this is a miserable shift. In a prophetic work where symbolical language is used, Rome might be called Babylon, on account of its moral resemblance to that ancient city; but the change of the name would have been altogether improper in a plain epistle, in which there was no reason for concealment. There is no doubt that he means the Babylon so often mentioned in the Old Testament. It is decisive against the notion of Peter’s residence in Rome, that in the Epistle which he addressed to the Christians there, Paul sent no salutation to him, although he saluted several others; and that, although he lived in Rome for at least two years, and wrote several epistles from it, he never once mentions his name. How could this have been if he had been bishop of that city? Not to multiply arguments, I shall only add, that Clement, who is so honorably mentioned in the New Testament, in an epistle written from Rome to the Church of Corinth, says that Paul suffered martyrdom in the west, but takes no notice of the martyrdom of Peter. His silence is absolutely unaccountable, if, as Papists tell us, Peter had been bishop of Rome, and had been crucified there before the eyes of Clement. The sum of all that has been said is, that we have no evidence that Peter was ever in Rome, and still less that he was its bishop.

Thus we see that the claims of the Pope are the baseless fabric of a vision. But although we should grant the premises, the conclusion would by no means necessarily follow. It is not a legitimate inference, that because Peter was universal bishop and resided in Rome, the bishops of Rome must be acknowledged the heads of the church, unless it could be shown that he had authority to transmit, and did actually leave, all his power and prerogatives to them. But at this point the proof totally fails. We have only assertion instead of argument; and it must be so, because Papists would have it so. How does it appear to have been the will of Christ that there should always be a visible head of his Church upon earth? How does it appear that the bishop of Antioch, where Peter is said to have first had his throne, has not as good a claim as the bishop of Rome? How comes it to pass that the ancient church knew nothing of this supremacy, and rejected all approaches to it? and that even a bishop of Rome thundered out anathemas against the bishop of Constantinople for assuming the very title in which his successors now glory?‡ And is it credible that

\* Acts i. 8.

† 1 Pet. v. 13.

‡ Gregory the Great, in A. D. 595.

Jesus Christ intended that they should be his representatives and vicegerents, whose ignorance, and profligacy, and cruelty, and falsehood, have stamped their names with infamy? that the gift of infallibility should be conferred upon adulterers, and robbers, and murderers? and the salvation of men should be suspended upon submission to devils in human shape, as many of the Popes well deserve to be called? To these questions we leave the votaries of Antichrist to return such answers as they can.

It is not necessary to proceed farther in the consideration of the form of government established in the Church of Rome, and to speak of its cardinals and its patriarchs, and its different ecclesiastical orders. When stripped of some adventitious circumstances, it resolves itself into simple Episcopacy; and our reasoning respecting this form of government will apply to every church, whether Greek, Papist, or Protestant, in which it is adopted.

I shall now, therefore, call your attention to the Episcopal form of government, and in the following remarks, shall refer to it as established in the southern part of the island.

In the Church of England, there are three ecclesiastical orders,—deacons, priests, and bishops. The lowest is the order of deacons, whose office it is to baptize, to read the Scriptures, homilies, and prayers to the people, to assist the priests in the distribution of the Eucharist, and if it seem good to the bishop, also to preach. It is the business of the priests, or presbyters, to preach, to read prayers, to administer both sacraments, and to pronounce the sentence of absolution upon penitents. To the bishop it belongs to ordain priests and deacons, to confirm those who have been baptized, and to rule over their dioceses, of which all the clergy are subject to their authority. In the government of the Church, neither deacons nor priests have any share; it is vested solely in the bishops. The latter may preach if they please, but this is a matter of choice. To preach the gospel is not an essential duty of their office, they are appointed merely to rule; and hence it appears that, although they receive double honour, they are not worthy of it, according to the judgment of Paul, who assigned it only to those who both rule well and labour in word and doctrine.\*

Hence you will perceive what is the specific difference between Episcopacy and Presbytery. Episcopacy holds a distinction of ranks among the ministers of religion; and its fundamental article is that a bishop is superior to a presbyter. According to Presbytery, all the ministers of the word are on a level in respect of office and authority, whatever differences may be among them, in age, and talents, and learning. A gradation of ranks is indeed allowed even by Presbyterians, who admit elders to rule, and deacons to serve the poor; but they assert the parity of those whose office it is to preach and administer the sacraments.

The arguments of Episcopalians in favour of their form of government, are derived from the Scriptures, as well as from the practice of antiquity.

In the first place, They have sometimes founded an argument upon the constitution of the Jewish Church, in which there was a gradation of ranks; the Levites being appointed to perform various inferior services in the tabernacle and temple, the priests to offer sacrifices upon the altar, and the High Priest to preside over them all, and to enter into the holy of holies. It has hence been inferred that the wisdom of Jesus Christ would undoubtedly lead him to give a similar constitution to his church. This however is only a presumptive argument, which is of no weight unless it be found to be supported by facts; and may be pronounced also to be a presumptuous one, as it prescribes the law of conduct, which he who is wiser than all men was bound to pursue. The Christian dispensation is so different from the Jewish, that no conclusion with respect to the former can be drawn from the mode of admin-

\* 1 Tim. v. 17.



istering the latter. The ceremonial system was totally abolished at the death of Christ; and it is to no purpose to presume that any part of it was renewed, unless it can be proved that it actually was so from Scripture. It is not necessary to proceed farther in the refutation of this argument, as it is abandoned and rejected as invalid by some of the best writers of the Episcopal communion.

In the second place, They affirm that there was a distinction of ranks among the office-bearers of the church, instituted by our Lord himself during his ministry upon earth; and they appeal for proof to the Apostles, who were of the first degree, and to the Evangelists, who were of the second. The Apostles represented the bishops of the church, and the seventy disciples the presbyters. But "this comparison," says Dr. Whitby, "will not hold, for the seventy received not their mission, as Presbyters do, from bishops, but immediately from the Lord Christ as well as the Apostles, and in their first mission were plainly sent on the same mission, and with the same power."\* According to him, they were not dependent upon the Apostles, and were equal to them in authority; and consequently, this is no warrant for Episcopalian subordination. Other writers of the same principles agree with him. The truth is, that the commission of the seventy seems to have been temporary, and probably ceased as soon as it was executed. But the argument is completely overthrown by a consideration which has been insisted upon even by an Episcopalian author. "It is obviously observable in the evangelical records, that the church was not and could not be founded till our Lord was risen from the dead, seeing it was to be founded on his resurrection." The truth of this remark is indisputable, and so likewise is the following reasoning from it. "If the Christian church had no being before Christ's resurrection, then certainly there was no government; and if no government, then certainly not prelatical government; and consequently, the argument is lost to all intents and purposes. It is clear as light, that the followers of Christ in the days of his flesh, were under no distinct government but that of the Jewish Church, with which they were still incorporated, and from which, as we have already proved, no consequence can be drawn for the nature of the Christian government."

In the third place, They reason in favour of Episcopacy from the cases of Timothy and Titus, whom they suppose to have been bishops, the one of Ephesus, and the other of Crete. They are indeed so called in the postscripts to the Epistles, which Paul addressed to them; but he who should reason from these would make himself ridiculous, because it is acknowledged by all learned men, that they are of a later age, and of no authority. Presbyterians affirm that there is not only no evidence that Timothy and Titus were bishops, but that the contrary is absolutely certain. Timothy was of a higher order even than a bishop, being expressly called an Evangelist, who was next in rank to an Apostle, and, like the Apostles, had a general care of the churches. Titus is commonly supposed to have held the same office. It is evident that Ephesus was not the stated charge of Timothy, because he would have left it when Paul went into Macedonia,† had not the Apostle entreated him to remain, on account of certain false teachers who were endeavouring to disseminate error in that church. Such intreaties would not have been necessary, if Timothy had been bishop of Ephesus, for such a man would not have thought of abandoning his station; nor would Paul have afterwards requested him to come to him at Rome, as he does in the second Epistle,‡ to be his companion and assistant there, in the absence of certain other persons who had withdrawn for different reasons. Hence it is evident that his residence in Ephesus was merely temporary, for the accomplishment of a particular purpose; and it happens most unfortunately for the pretended bishopric of Timothy, that when Paul

\* Whitby's Commentary, note on Luke x. 1. † 1 Tim. i. 3. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 3.

sometime before had an interview with the ministers of that church, as we read in the twentieth chapter of the Acts, he found that they had no need of a bishop, because they had not only one but many; for he addresses all the elders, as we shall afterwards see, by this appellation.\*

It is evident that the argument equally fails with respect to Titus. He was left in Crete to ordain elders, to reprove sharply unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, to admonish heretics, and excommunicate such as were obstinate.† But, according to the principles of Episcopalians themselves, his office was extraordinary. The elders whom he was appointed to ordain, are expressly called bishops, as we shall afterwards show. But to ordain bishops is not the work of a bishop, but of an archbishop; and none will contend that there was any such person in the Apostolic church. Titus therefore could not be a bishop, but must have held a superior rank. The case seems to have been this, that the affairs of the church in Crete were not yet properly settled, and Titus, with the power of an Evangelist, was left by Paul on that island, to set in order the things which were wanting, and particularly to appoint ministers to labour in word and doctrine. That he was not the bishop of Crete may be inferred from the request or order of the Apostle, that he should come to him at Nicopolis, where he had determined to winter.‡ Paul surely would not have called him away from Crete, if it had been his stated charge; for, however common it has since been for bishops not to reside in their dioceses, no such practice was then known; and had there been any attempt to introduce it, the Apostle would have opposed himself to it as a criminal desertion of duty.

In the fourth place, They reason from the Epistles of Jesus Christ to the seven churches of Asia, which are addressed to the angels of those churches, by whom none can be meant but the bishops. I lay no stress upon an argument which has been used by Presbyterians, that the angels are the churches themselves, because it appears from the contents of the Epistles, and from the occasional use of the plural number, that they are addressed to the whole body of Christians. It is inconceivable that a whole society should be called an angel, and what is still more strange, the angel of itself; and there is certainly no reason for resorting to this supposition, as the Epistles, although intended for the respective churches, would naturally be sent to the persons who presided over them. I have therefore no doubt that the angel signifies an individual, but it does not follow that it signifies a bishop in the Episcopalian sense. It is a name not of order, but of office, which was given by the Jews to the president of their synagogues, and chiefly for this reason, that he offered up prayers to God in the name of the assembly. This being known to be the sense in which the word was understood by the Jews, John, who was himself a Jew, naturally applied it to the president of a Christian Church, or the minister who officiated in holy things, and acted as intercessor with God for the people. The utmost which can be fairly inferred, is, that in each of the Asiatic churches, there was a person who held the first place; but Episcopalians can derive no advantage to their cause from this circumstance, because Presbyterians hold, that in every congregation there is, or ought to be, one person at least who is superior to the rest, and to whom it pertains to conduct the public offices of religion.

Episcopacy is founded on the assumption, that bishops are of a different order from presbyters. If we can show that, in the style of Scripture, they are of the same order, the whole fabric falls to the ground. Now, when we look into the New Testament, we find that bishop and presbyter are convertible terms, and are indiscriminately applied to the same individuals. When Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, he stopped at Miletus, from which he sent to

\* Acts xx. 28.

† Tit. i. 5, &amp;c.

‡ Tit. iii. 12.



Ephesus, and called the elders or presbyters of the church. No mention, you will observe, is made of the bishop; but we are at no loss to find the reason. It had several bishops, and these were the very presbyters whom the Apostle had summoned to meet him, for he says to them, "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers."\* Perhaps prejudice or party-zeal had some influence in rendering the word *overseers*, in this instance, because the term, in the original, if rendered in the usual way, would not accord with the Episcopalian scheme. The Greek word is *ἐπισκοπος*, which, indeed, literally signifies *overseers*, but should have been translated *bishops* here, as it is in other places; but, then, it would have been evident to all, that Paul knew of no distinction between a bishop and a presbyter, because those who were first called presbyters, are now called bishops. In his Epistle to Titus, he says to him, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God."† It would be a waste of time to show, that here the bishop and the presbyter are the same person, and no man can resist the evidence, however much he may be disposed. The presbyter must be blameless, for the bishop must be blameless. There would be no force in this conclusion if a bishop and a presbyter were different persons. And hence you perceive the reason why, in his First Epistle to Timothy, he makes no mention at all of presbyters, but speaks only of bishops and deacons. It is, that he did not consider the two former as different; and consequently, in describing the qualifications of the one class, he describes those of the other. For the same reason he takes no notice of presbyters, in his Epistle to the Philippians, but addresses himself to the bishops and deacons.‡ He thus furnishes us with a new argument against Episcopacy. There were several bishops in the Church of Philippi; but how could this be, according to the scheme of our antagonists? More bishops than one in a church seem to them as monstrous as more heads than one upon a human body. It follows that the bishops of Philippi were plain presbyters, and that such were the only bishops in the apostolic age. Wherever Episcopacy may be found, it is vain to seek for it in the Scriptures. Of this, its advocates are in some degree sensible, and therefore appeal to antiquity; but upon this part of the argument we cannot at present enter.

## LECTURE XCVIII.

### ON THE CHURCH.

Examination of the Arguments for Episcopacy, Drawn from Christian Antiquity.—Just Import of its Testimony.—Explanation of the Renunciation of Episcopacy in the Solemn League and Covenant.—Independent and Presbyterian Forms of Government.—Examination of the Arguments for Independency.—Proof that the Term "Church" in the New Testament Includes more than One Congregation.

I CONCLUDED the last lecture by observing, that Episcopalians appeal to antiquity in favour of their scheme of ecclesiastical government. Many of them

\* Acts xx. 28.

† Tit. i. 5—7.

‡ Phil. i. 1.

have too much wisdom to think that any decisive argument can be drawn from the Scriptures, and they therefore have recourse to the practice of the primitive church; contending that, as Episcopacy is the most ancient form of government, it should be universally adopted. If it could be proved that there were such bishops as they plead for, ever since the death of the Apostles, and that it was universally affirmed by the earlier Fathers that they were instituted by the Apostles, we might be perplexed, but still should not be convinced, while we could find no vestige of them in the genuine apostolical writings. It is a Protestant principle, that nothing is an article of faith which is not delivered in the Scriptures in express terms, or by necessary consequence; and the moment we deviate from this principle, and admit any thing upon the authority of tradition, we begin to build upon the foundation of popery, and cannot foresee the extent of the superstructure which we may be led step by step to raise upon it. It has been observed, that Episcopalians, in managing the plea for their church from the testimony of antiquity, have been compelled to use the same sort of reasoning in defence of it, against the employment of which by papists, they protest in their controversy with them; that is, they will not allow them to argue from tradition in favour of their usages and dogmas. Such is the unhappy effect of adopting a principle for a particular purpose, while we find it inconvenient to follow it out into all its consequences. We are entangled in our own reasonings; we are under the necessity of retracting, at one time, what we had asserted at another; we give our antagonist an advantage which he will not fail to improve, and of which we cannot deprive him without totally shifting our ground.

It is not denied that the Fathers speak of bishops in the primitive church, and that lists are given of the succession of them in the principal Sees. With respect to these, there is a good deal of uncertainty; and it happens unfortunately for the high claims of the Church of Rome, that it is not easy to tell who came in the room of Peter, who, they pretend, was the first bishop. Clements, Clitus, Lenius, and Anacletus, have been mentioned; but it is doubted whether Clitus and Anacletus were not the same individual, and in what order the persons now named succeeded each other; while some have suspected that they are all cotemporary, and equally Bishops of Rome, as there were several bishops at the same time in Philippi. But, although it were granted that the catalogues are correct, it remains to be proved that they were bishops in the Episcopalian, and not merely in the Scriptural sense; and Dr. Stillingfleet, himself a bishop, has candidly acknowledged, "that mere succession of single persons named above the rest in the successions in apostolical churches, cannot enforce any superiority of power in the persons so named, above others supposed to be joint governors of the churches with them."\* We have seen that the titles of bishops and presbyters were indiscriminately given to all the ministers who conducted the religious service in the apostolic churches. It seems, however, that it was not long till the title of bishop was appropriated to one of them for the following reason. When there were more presbyters than one in a church, it was necessary, for the sake of order, that one should preside in the meetings which were held for the management of the public affairs. This honour was naturally assigned to the presbyter who was oldest, or who had most experience and the greatest talents; and he was known by the different names of president, pastor, governor, priest, and bishop. As it is not improbable that there were several presbyters in the seven churches, and this is certain with respect to Ephesus, when Paul had an interview with them; some have supposed that it is this president who is called the angel, in the epistles addressed to them. But he was only *primus inter pares*, the first among his equals, and first by their choice and consent. Sir

\* Works, vol. ii. p. 344, *Diversities of forms of Church Gov.* Part ii. ch. iv.



Peter King, in his *Inquiry into the Constitution of the Primitive Church*, considers bishops and presbyters as exactly of the same order, and invested with the same powers; and defines a presbyter to be "a person in holy orders, having thereby an inherent right to perform the whole office of a bishop, but being possessed of no place or parish, nor actually discharging it, without the permission and consent of the bishop of a place or parish."\* This definition differs a little, but not materially, from the view which we have taken of bishops and presbyters; for it makes only this distinction between them, that bishops had a charge, and presbyters had not, and consequently, that presbyters must have leave from the bishop before they could perform any part of their function within the limits of his jurisdiction. Presbyterians make a similar distinction, and considering every minister as bishop in his own parish or congregation, forbid any other minister to preach and baptize in it without permission asked and obtained. Sir Peter proceeds to show, at considerable length, that the distinction, in the primitive church, was little more than nominal, because the powers of bishops and presbyters were the same. He proves, from the writings of the Fathers, that presbyters had a right to preach, that they baptized; that they administered the Eucharist; that they presided in the consistories together with the bishop; that they had power to excommunicate, to restore penitents, and to confirm; and lastly, that they had the power of ordination. He was therefore fully justified in saying, that "they were of the very same specific order with bishops, having the same inherent right to perform all ecclesiastical offices."† Thus far it appears that antiquity gives no countenance to modern Episcopacy, which affirms bishops to be of a different order from presbyters, and appropriates to them the power of ordination, and the whole government of the church.

Episcopalians appeal with much confidence to the epistles of Ignatius, as furnishing clear proof that, in his time, the church was governed by bishops; and they lay the greater stress upon his authority, because he flourished in the first, and ended his course by a glorious martyrdom early in the second century, was contemporary at least with some of the Apostles, and from an expression which he uses, but which is ambiguous, is supposed to have seen Christ in the flesh. There has, however, been much controversy respecting his epistles, and it is not yet terminated. When they were first published, they were full of gross corruptions, and contained heretical sentiments, which such a man as Ignatius must have held in abhorrence; and as it thus appears that unprincipled men had altered them to serve their own purposes, it is impossible to determine to what extent they had carried their wicked design. In the more correct form which they have since assumed, it is impossible to ascertain with precision, what is genuine and what is interpolated, as some of the most learned writers of the Church of England have acknowledged; and this being the case, an appeal to them cannot decide the controversy, because it remains doubtful whether it is Ignatius himself who speaks, or some other person in his name. The style of the epistles concerning the dignity, the authority, and the prerogatives of a bishop, and the demand of little less than implicit submission to him, ill accords with the simplicity of the primitive times, and with the humility which may be conceived to have characterized a man who had lived with the Apostles, and had imbibed their spirit. Would the genuine Ignatius have said without qualification, that what the bishop approves is acceptable to God?

After all, from these epistles as they stand, it is the opinion even of some Episcopalians, that little can be drawn in favour of their scheme. "In all those thirty-five testimonies," says Bishop Stillingfleet, "produced out of Ignatius' epistles for Episcopacy, I can meet but with one which is brought to prove the least semblance of an institution of Christ for Episcopacy; and if I

\* Chap. iv. § 1.

† Chap. iv. § 3.

be not deceived, the sense of that place is clearly mistaken too.”\* From the impossibility of determining what is genuine and what is interpolated in those epistles, the utmost which we can safely infer from them is, that there were bishops in the days of Ignatius, but this concession will not at all serve the cause of our antagonists, because there were bishops in the days of the Apostles, who, we have seen, were only presbyters, and because the person to whom this name was afterwards given by way of distinction, was merely the president in an assembly of his equals.

We have already seen, that the bishops of the primitive church were very different from the persons to whom this title is given in modern times; that they possessed no peculiar powers, and could do nothing which a presbyter was not competent to perform. They differed from them also in the extent of their dioceses. A modern bishop has the superintendence of many churches or congregations scattered over the face of the country; but an ancient bishop presided over a single congregation only, or at most, over the Christians of a single city. The original meaning of the word has not been less changed in this respect, than by making it denote a person of a different order from a presbyter. There were bishops not only in large cities, but in small villages, as has been shown in many instances. The diocese of a bishop was exactly the parish of a Presbyterian minister; and many bishoprics were much smaller than the parishes in this country. The number of bishops shows that their jurisdiction was circumscribed within very narrow limits. In that part of Africa which was subject to the Romans, there were in the days of Augustine, about five hundred orthodox bishops, and four hundred of the sect of the Donatists; and in Ireland, which we have no reason to believe to have been nearly as populous as at present, St. Patrick is said to have founded three hundred and sixty-five churches, each of which was governed by a bishop. It would require a very perspicacious eye to perceive any distinction between such bishops and those whom we call pastors of particular congregations. There is certainly no resemblance between them and the prelates of the English Church; and with whatever respect the latter may speak of them, I suspect that if they were still officiating in their humble charges, the bishops of the present age would not acknowledge them as their equals. It may be thought that, however diminutive the ancient dioceses were, the bishops truly deserved the title, because they had at least some clergy under them. There is no doubt that sometimes this was the case; and we have shown that this supposition is of little use to establish the claims of modern Episcopacy, because the bishop was at first only *primus inter pares*; but it is probable that many of them laboured alone, without presbyters to assist them and execute their orders. It is not likely, for example, that those Irish bishops had inferior clergy, whose churches were so poor that they could afford them no better endowment than as much ground as would pasture two cows. This, we are informed, was the whole income of some of them.

The epistle of Clemens, “whose name,” says Paul, “is in the book of life,” is supposed to have been written between the years sixty-four and seventy of the first century, and consequently before the destruction of Jerusalem. It was addressed to the Church of Corinth, and had the same object with the epistles of Paul, to compose the contentions and divisions which existed in it. He says that “the Apostles, preaching through the countries and cities, appointed such of the first-fruits of their ministry as they had proved by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons;” plainly referring to two orders only, whereas Episcopalian affirm that there are three in the church. He goes on to say that “the Apostles, having known by our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be great strife about the name of Episcopacy, appointed the foresaid persons, namely,

\* Works, vol. ii. p. 349. *Divine Right of Forms of Church Government*, Part ii. c. vi.



bishops and deacons, and ordained that there should be a succession of them." Then, referring to the insubordination which prevailed at Corinth, he adds, "It will be no small sin if we expel from the episcopate those who have blamelessly and holily offered the gifts. Blessed are the presbyters who have gone before, and who have had a fruitful and perfect dissolution, for they do not fear lest any person should remove them from their settled place." It is manifest that he here speaks of bishops and presbyters, as the same persons; and he does so in other parts of the Epistle, where, omitting the mention of bishops, he speaks only of presbyters. "It is base, very base, and unworthy of the conduct of Christians, that the ancient church of the Corinthians should, by means of one or two persons, make an insurrection against the presbyters."\* And he tenders this exhortation: "Be ye who have made this insurrection subject to the presbyters." It is obvious that Clement knew of no bishops in the Corinthian Church, but presbyters; and it is remarkable that he never speaks of any persons in that church under the name of bishops, and still less of one to whom the title exclusively belonged.

Episcopalians appeal also to Irenæus, who presided over the Church of Lyons in the second century, and imagine that he bears testimony to their cause, when he says, "We can reckon those who were appointed bishops by the Apostles in the churches, and their successors, to our days, whom they left as their successors, delivering to them the same dignity of power," as his words have been rendered, but literally "delivering to them their own place of mastership;" evidently meaning nothing more than that they constituted them the supreme office-bearers in the church, as we acknowledge a preaching presbyter to be. Irenæus shows that these were the bishops to whom he referred, by saying farther: "It behoves us to hear the presbyters who are in the church, those who have their succession from the Apostles, and with the succession of the episcopate, have received the gift of truth according to the good pleasure of the Father."

Jerome, who in learning and judgment was equal to any of the Fathers, is decidedly against the divine origin of Episcopacy. A deacon in the Church of Rome had broached the opinion that deacons were superior to presbyters; Jerome confutes it in one of his epistles by this argument, that presbyters and bishops were the same in the days of the Apostles, and that no man could be so foolish as to maintain that deacons are superior to bishops. The proposition which is the foundation of his argument, he proves from those passages of Scripture which are usually produced by us to show the identity of apostolical bishops and presbyters. According to this Father, bishops and presbyters were not originally different, either in order or in degree; but the titles were given to the same individuals, and the distinction between them which subsisted in his time, was merely an arrangement of human prudence for the preservation of peace. This is not a deduction from his argument, but it is explicitly stated by himself. "A presbyter is the same with a bishop. Before, by the instigation of the devil, there were parties in religion, and it was said I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, the churches were governed by the common consent of presbyters. But afterwards it was decreed throughout the whole world, that one chosen from the presbyters should be set over the rest, to whom the whole care of the church should pertain, that the seeds of schism might be plucked up." If Jerome is right, the plea of apostolical authority in favour of Episcopacy is unfounded; its *jus divinum* is a dream; and its authors, more modest than their successors, rested it solely upon the principle of expedience.

It appears, then, that in the controversy with the advocates of Episcopacy, we have to encounter strong assertions, but feeble proofs; lofty claims, but a very

\* Vid. Epist. 1. ad Corinth.

questionable title; and in short, that their cause has nothing to support it, but the sound of words in opposition to the sense.

You may think it unnecessary to have dwelt so long upon this subject, as with a few exceptions, we in this country are all agreed in rejecting the Episcopalian government as unscriptural. But in the other part of the island it is established by law, and with the arrogance which has so remarkably characterised it, pronounces those who have adopted a different form to be schismatics, and hardly entitled to the appellation of Christians. Dissenters, we have been told, have "a religion without a church," because what they call their church is not governed by bishops.

You are aware of the violent struggle between Episcopacy and Presbytery in the days of our fathers, in the course of which they displayed exemplary zeal, and were subjected to severe sufferings, resisting even to blood. The reign of Episcopacy in Scotland was marked by cruelty and murder. It was publicly and solemnly renounced at the renewal of the National Covenant, and afterwards in the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms, and was finally abolished at the Revolution. There is a fact relative to this business which is not generally known, and deserves to be mentioned; and I shall give it in the words of Mr. Baxter: "The covenant was proposed by the Parliament to the consideration of the Synod at Westminster. The synod stumbled at some things in it, and especially at the word *Prelacy*. Mr. Burges, the Prolocutor, Mr. Gataker, and abundance more, declared their judgments to be for Episcopacy, even for the ancient moderate Episcopacy, in which one stated president with his Presbytery governed every church; though not for the English diocesan frame, in which one bishop without his presbytery did, by a lay chancellor's court, govern all the presbyters and churches of a diocese being many hundreds; and that in a secular manner, by abundance of upstart secular officers, unknown to the primitive church. Hereupon grew some debate in the assembly, some being against every degree of bishops, (especially the Scottish divines,) and others being for a moderate Episcopacy. But these English divines would not subscribe the covenant, till there were an alteration suited to their judgments, and so a parenthesis was yielded to, as describing that sort of prelacy which they opposed,"—which follows the words, 'We shall endeavour the extirpation of prelacy,'—" [that is, church government by archbishops, bishops, deans, and chapters, archdeacons, and all other ecclesiastical officers, depending on that hierarchy.] All which conjoined are mentioned as the description of church government which they meant by prelacy, as not extending to the ancient Episcopacy. When the covenant was agreed on, the Lords and Commons first took it themselves; and Mr. Thomas Coleman preached in the House of Lords, and gave it them with this public explication, *that by prelacy, we mean not all Episcopacy, but only the form which is here described.*"\* Hence you learn that the Solemn League was not such a security of presbytery as is commonly supposed, having been so framed that the friends of moderate Episcopacy could enter into it; but this is a matter of little moment, since we renounce Episcopacy, not because our fathers renounced it, but because we deem it to be contrary to Scripture.

I proceed to speak of Independency; but it is impossible to examine its claims, without at the same time attending to those of Presbytery. These are the only forms of government which appear to receive any countenance from Scripture, so that, if we overthrow the one, we virtually establish the other; and hence, it is necessary to view them in connexion. I begin with stating the principles of Independency, which are the following: that every particular society of visible professors, agreeing to walk together in the faith

\* Baxter's Narrative of his own Life and Times, Part i. p. 48.



and order of the gospel, is a complete church; that the whole power of government is vested in the *cœtus fidelium*, the assembly of the faithful; and that all censures and acts of government are administered in single congregations. The principles of Presbytery are, that particular congregations are only a part of the church, which is composed of many congregations; that the power of government is lodged in certain office-bearers, appointed by Jesus Christ; and that there is a subordination of courts, in which the sentences of inferior courts may be reviewed, and either affirmed or reversed. Hence you perceive the reason of the names by which these two forms of government are distinguished. The former is called Independency, because each congregation is a church distinct from and independent upon all other churches in the world, possessing all power in itself, and accountable only to Jesus Christ for its proceedings. The latter is called Presbytery, because it is governed by presbyters, or teaching and ruling elders, who, although chosen by the people, do not derive their power from them, but from Christ, and meet in presbyteries,—for this is truly the name of all our ecclesiastical courts, although, for the sake of distinction, they are denominated sessions, presbyteries, and synods,—meet in presbyteries, I say, to regulate the affairs of particular congregations, of several congregations connected by vicinity, or of all the congregations in a province or a nation. You will observe, however, that these names do not mark, with perfect accuracy, the difference between the two forms of government; for it is not only possible, but it has actually happened, that a church has been independent of all other churches, and yet has been governed by presbyters, to the exclusion of the people; but use has affixed a definite sense to the words, and they immediately suggest the particular constitution of the churches to which they are respectively applied.

With a view to establish the principle upon which their system rests as its foundation, Independents labour to prove, that the churches mentioned in the New Testament were all single congregations. It is granted that this is sometimes the meaning of the word, as when the church in the house of a certain individual is spoken of; but I had occasion, in a former lecture, to remark, that there are cases in which it will not admit of so limited a signification. This is a point of great importance in the present controversy; and if it can be proved that the word church is used, when it must be understood to comprehend several congregations, we shall be authorized to conclude that the plan of independency is unscriptural. It will be necessary to enter into some detail, and I shall select as an example, the church of Jerusalem.

Let it be observed that, although we read of the “churches of Judea,” we never read of the “churches of Jerusalem;” but the “church” of that city is always mentioned in the singular number. It is impossible to account for this fact upon the principles of Independents, except by supposing, that there were no more believers in Jerusalem than might be collected in one assembly; and accordingly, they affirm that such was the case, and endeavour to explain the passages of Scripture, from which their antagonists draw a contrary conclusion, so as to favour this hypothesis. I think, however, that, to an impartial judge, it will appear that the laws of just criticism require a different interpretation, and that their comments do violence to the sacred text.

Let us attend to the narrative of the success of the Gospel in Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached to the Jews, “they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day, there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” The chapter closes with this remark, “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved;”\* which is, indeed, very general, but conveys to us this information, that the society was constantly receiving an accession of new converts. Not long after, Peter again addressed

\* Acts ii. 41, 47.

the people, and what was the effect? "Many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand."\* The historian speaks of *men*—*των ανδρων*,—and as this word denotes males, as distinguished from females, it may be fairly inferred that many women, although not mentioned, were converted at the same time, so that the whole number was probably much greater than five thousand. But whether we suppose females, as well as males, to have believed on this occasion or not, it is perfectly plain that the five thousand were additional to the three thousand who were formerly mentioned. One or two commentators, of great name, having unluckily adopted the notion that the three thousand are included in the five, Independents have eagerly laid hold of it to help them out of a difficulty. But I would ask, whether this idea would present itself to any person, whose mind was not prepossessed with a particular system; and whether it would not naturally occur to such a person, that Luke, who had stated the effect of the first sermon of Peter, here states the effect of the second, without referring to any thing which is past. Were another historian to tell us that, on a certain day, three thousand men joined an army, and that some days after, it was joined by five thousand, there is not a reader in the world who would suppose that he included the first number in the second. It is impossible to conceive any reason why a reader of the Acts should form a different opinion with respect to these two distinct numbers of converts. Thus we have eight thousand disciples in Jerusalem, besides those who were believers before the day of Pentecost, and those who, without being specified, were daily added to the church. It has been said with respect to those converts, and particularly such of them as embraced the Gospel on the day of Pentecost, that they were strangers, whose usual residence was in the countries enumerated, but who had come to Jerusalem to worship at the feast. It would be too much to deny that any of them were strangers; but there would be a manifest absurdity in supposing them to have been all of this description; for, was it ever heard that an extraordinary event brought together only the sojourners in a city? Does not every rational ground of calculation suggest the idea that sojourners were only a minority, and that the assembly consisted chiefly of the inhabitants of Jerusalem? It has been remarked that they are called "dwellers in Jerusalem,"† and that the word *κατοικειν*, which the sacred historian uses, signifies *to have a permanent abode in a place*. When a temporary residence is expressed, the verb *παροικειν* is employed, which imports simply *to sojourn, or to be in a place for a short time*. Many of the converts, on the day of Pentecost, had lived in foreign countries; but they had now removed to Jerusalem, from secular or religious motives, or perhaps, as has been supposed, in expectation of the Messiah, whose advent was looked for about this period. At any rate, although they were present in Jerusalem only for a time, there is no reason to think that the assembly on Pentecost was composed wholly of them; and if it should be admitted, that, of the three thousand, one thousand, or even five hundred, were foreigners, we should make an ample allowance.

To the eight thousand who, at the lowest computation, already belonged to the church of Jerusalem, we must add many more; for we read that "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women;" that "the number of the disciples was multiplied;" and again, that "the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."‡ These passages import a very abundant increase, and justify us in understanding the following words, not of the disciples in Judea, or among the Jewish nation at large, but of those in Jerusalem alone: "Thou seest, brother, how many thou-

\* Acts iv. 4.

† Acts ii. 5.

‡ Acts v. 14. vi. 1, 7.



sands of Jews there are which believe;”\* in the original, ποσὶ μυριάδες—*how many myriads, or tens of thousands.*

Independents are compelled by their system to reduce to the lowest possible number the disciples in a particular city. It is necessary for them to prove, not that the success of the gospel was great, but that it was small. They surely cannot feel any complacency in thus weakening the argument in favour of Christianity, from its rapid and extensive success; but we may justly suspect the cause which is forced to resort to such an expedient for support. It is certain that the argument completely fails in the case of Jerusalem, in which there was only one church, but the members amounted to thousands and myriads.

It is objected by Independents, that “all that believed were together, and had all things common.”† It has been answered, that although the disciples, whose number was at this time about three thousand, had met together in one place, it will not follow that they could do so when they had increased to ten or twenty thousand; and yet even then they were only one church. It has been remarked too, that although the phrase ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ, translated *together*, may signify *in one place*, yet this is not necessarily its meaning, and that it occurs where it can import only unity of purpose: “The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered *together*—ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ—against the Lord, and against his Christ.”‡ These words are applied to the conspiracy of Pilate, the Sanhedrim, and Herod, against our Saviour; but we know that, although they concurred in one design, they did not assemble in the same place.

It is objected again, that they are said “to have continued daily with one accord in the temple.”§ As this immediately follows the other passage, the same answer may be returned, that, if three thousand might assemble in the temple, a meeting of all the disciples in it was impossible when the number had become much greater. Besides, as the meetings were daily, a little reflection will convince us that a multitude of people, chiefly in the lower ranks of life, could no more have found time every day to attend the ministrations of the Apostles than they could find it now; and, consequently, that the historian can only mean that the Apostles daily frequented the temple, and that the disciples met them there as they had opportunity. But there was no occasion always to repair to it for the purpose of hearing them, because the Apostles did not confine their labours to the temple, but “in every house ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.”||

An argument for one congregation in Jerusalem is founded on these words: “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together. And the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and of one soul.”¶ But these two verses, although they stand in the order now quoted, have no connexion with each other; and it is altogether unfair to quote them as a proof that the multitude were assembled in the place which was shaken, as any person will see by reading the passage. The persons assembled in that place, are called the Apostles’ own company; and probably were a select number of the disciples, met together to pray for the deliverance of Peter and John from the hands of their enemies.

The last argument is drawn from these words: “And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch, and of the rest durst no man join himself to them; but the people magnified them.”\*\* But here the question occurs, Who were the persons that were assembled in this porch? It is said in the beginning of the verse, that “by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people;” and it is then added, that “they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch.” The most natural idea is, that the per-

\* Acts xxi. 20.

† Ib. v. 42.

‡ Ib. ii. 44.

§ Ib. iv. 31, 32.

¶ Ib. iv. 26.

\*\* Ib. v. 12, 13.

§ Ib. ii. 46.

sons referred to were the Apostles; and as no others are mentioned but the people, or the Jews, who resorted to the temple, it is a mere fancy to suppose that the church was assembled in it.

It has appeared that there is no reason to suppose that all the Jews from foreign countries who were converted at Pentecost were merely sojourners in Jerusalem, and that the historian makes use of a term which imports that they had taken up their abode in it. This is confirmed by an event which took place some time after, and is thus related: "In those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."\* The Grecians, or Hellenists, as every person knows, were Jews, who, living without the bounds of Judea, and scattered over what was once the Macedonian empire, spoke the Greek language, and used the Greek translation of the Scriptures in their synagogues. Of these there were some in the Church of Jerusalem; and it is highly probable that there were also others, who, having come from different regions, understood neither Hebrew nor Greek, and were acquainted only with the language of the country in which they were born. Hence arises a new argument for a plurality of congregations in Jerusalem. Although all the members of the church might have been convened in one place, they could not all have joined in the service, because what was understood by one part of them, would have been unintelligible to the other. It would be absurd to imagine that different speakers addressed the audience at the same time, or that the same speaker delivered a discourse first in one language and then in another. There is no reason, except the interests of a party, for making any supposition but the natural one, that as the first disciples in Jerusalem—the place of resort to Jews from every region of the earth—spoke different languages, they were divided into different assemblies, in which every man heard in his own tongue the wonderful works of God. As some time elapsed after the day of Pentecost before the Apostles went forth to preach the Gospel to the nations of the world, unless there were in Jerusalem believers who spoke different languages, the gift of tongues which the Apostles had received would have been useless during this interval. We have seen that, from their number, the primitive disciples must have been divided into several congregations, and we now see that, if the number had been smaller, the formation of distinct societies was necessary for the purpose of edification. We have therefore one church, made up of several congregations, according to the Presbyterian plan, not a number of independent assemblies, possessing each the powers of a church in itself.

To strengthen our argument, let us observe that, in the Church of Jerusalem, many persons were employed in performing the ordinary ministrations. It is certain that all the Apostles continued in it for a considerable time after it was founded. It appears that with them were associated prophets, or inspired men, who foretold future events, or explained by supernatural assistance the predictions of the Old Testament; and we read of the elders or presbyters of that Church, or ordinary ministers of the word, as this title usually imports, and as Independents will grant; for they deny that there is any such office-bearer by divine appointment as a ruling, distinct from a preaching, elder. Now, I should wish to be informed by them, how all these persons were employed? What were twelve Apostles, several prophets, and a competent number of ministers, doing? Independents tell us that they had only one congregation; but if so, how could they find scope for the exercise of their gifts? The Christians in Jerusalem could not be always hearing sermons, because they had their worldly affairs to attend to; but unless the Apostles and their assistants, were engaged in preaching from morning to night, on every day of the

\* Acts vi. 1.



week, the turn of each must have come at distant intervals, and during a considerable part of their time they must have been idle, in respect of this most important duty of their office. We find, however, that this was not the case. The Apostles were so much occupied with preaching, that they found it impossible to pay attention to the affairs of the poor; and hence, when complaints arose that some were neglected, they instituted the order of deacons: "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables: wherefore, brethren, look ye out seven men whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."\* It is a downright absurdity to suppose that so many preachers could have been kept in constant employment by a single congregation; and every man who lays aside prejudice, and judges dispassionately, will be of this opinion. No rational account can be given of so many office-bearers, not sinecurists, but active labourers in the work of the gospel, remaining in Jerusalem, except by admitting that the disciples were divided into many congregations.

The last argument for the existence of more congregations than one in Jerusalem, is founded on the want of a place in which all the disciples could assemble. To this argument Independents have a ready answer, that they could be contained in the temple, and that it appears that the Apostles preached in it daily. It is easy for some men to get rid of a difficulty by a few general assertions, especially when they are talking of something very remote, into all the particulars of which we cannot enter; but capacious as the temple was, it is not certain that ten or twelve thousand could have frequently gone into it, without incommoding the multitudes of unconverted Jews who went up to it to worship. It is not certain that the priests and rulers would have permitted acknowledged assemblies of the disciples, whom they accounted heretics and apostates, to be held within its precincts. The contrary is, I think, highly probable; and we may be sure that an attempt to commemorate the death of Christ, by the celebration of the Eucharist, would have been immediately resisted. The Apostles, indeed, preached daily in the temple; not, however, to the whole church of Jerusalem, but to the Jews whom they accidentally found in it; and this is evident from the words of the sacred historian, who says, that they preached "daily in the temple, and in every house;"† that is, while they preached to the Jews, in the temple, they preached in private houses to the Christians, and consequently, had many congregations. These observations are obvious to the plainest understanding; and nothing but the blinding power of prejudice can prevent any man from perceiving their truth.

\* Acts vi. 2—4.

† Ib. v. 42.

## LECTURE XCIX.

## ON THE CHURCH.

Independent and Presbyterian Forms of Church Government Examined.—Proof that the Power of the Church Rulers does not flow from the People.—Opinions of Dr. Owen.—Argument against Independency from the Council of Jerusalem.—Superiority of the Presbyterian Plan.

IN the preceding lecture, I entered upon the consideration of the two forms of ecclesiastical government, which alone seem to receive any countenance from Scripture, Presbytery and Independency; and proposed to discuss them together, because the establishment of the one necessarily involves the overthrow of the other.

We have examined the first principle of Independency, from which it derives its name, that each congregation of Christians is a complete church, possessing in itself all the powers and privileges which Jesus Christ has conferred upon the church, and unconnected with all other churches in the world, except by a common profession of the faith. We have seen that this principle does not apply to the Church of Jerusalem, which has appeared, from several arguments, to have consisted of more congregations than one. We might draw the same conclusion with respect to some other churches mentioned in the New Testament; but your attention has been confined to that of Jerusalem, because its history is more fully detailed.

The obvious inference from the fact, that in Jerusalem there were several congregations, which are nevertheless represented as one church, is, that those congregations were incorporated, or so united by some common tie, as to compose only one body. Now, this could be no other than the same government, to which these congregations were subject; as the inhabitants of different cities and provinces constitute one nation, not simply by living in the same country, but by obeying the same laws, and acknowledging the authority of the same civil rulers. Independents could not, consistently with their principles, have spoken of the *Church* of Jerusalem, but must have adopted a different phraseology, if they had composed the narrative in the Acts, and have said, the *churches* of Jerusalem. It follows, therefore, that there was a presbytery in Jerusalem, composed of the Apostles and elders, who came together, as we see from the fifteenth chapter, to manage the affairs of all the congregations in the city, and to whose decrees they were bound to submit. This is the most rational account of the matter; and it is so natural, that it follows from the particulars mentioned in the history, without any effort; whereas Independents are compelled to have recourse to a variety of awkward expedients, to make out their favourite point, that there was only one congregation; and in particular, to reduce the believers in that city to the lowest possible number. And thus, what is gained to their cause, is lost to Christianity; which, if they are right in their calculations with respect to Jerusalem and other cities, had very little success in the primitive ages, and could boast of only handfuls of converts in the most populous places.

I now proceed to consider the second principle of Independency, which is, That all power is vested in the church collective, or in the body of the faithful; that to them the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed; and that those who exercise any authority in the church, in the character of rulers, derive it from the people. In opposition to this principle, Presbyterians maintain, That the power of governing the church belongs exclusively to certain



office-bearers, who derive their authority from Jesus Christ, and are accountable to him alone for the exercise of it. They are not, indeed, lords over God's heritage, but helpers of the faith and joy of the saints; and are their servants, but only in this sense, that the object of all their ministrations should be, the spiritual good of those who are committed to their care.

The constitution of the church differs from that of a civil society. A voluntary society is formed by the free consent of the members. Each of them has certain rights which he is desirous to secure, and to enlarge by the co-operation of others; and he therefore unites with them upon such terms as seem best calculated to promote the common design. They proceed in concert to compose a code of laws, and to appoint certain persons who shall have authority to execute the laws, and to manage the affairs of the society. In such cases, power necessarily emanates from the people. The society is created by them for their own benefit; and the rulers owe their official existence solely to the deed of their constituents, which is the source of their power, and prescribes its limits. Here, the society is before the rulers; but with respect to the church, the rulers were before the society; and no reasoning, therefore, from the one case, is fairly applicable to the other. There was no church when our Lord gave the Apostles their commission; when he committed to Peter, and to them all, the keys of the kingdom of heaven; when he invested them with authority to preach the gospel, to administer the ordinances, and to exercise discipline over his professed disciples. They were appointed immediately by him; and they were appointed as the first in a long succession, which was to continue to the end of time, as we learn from his promise to them: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."\* The office of the Apostles was extraordinary, and ceased at their death; but, besides the gifts of inspiration and of miracles, they were possessed of ordinary powers, for the edification and government of the church, which did not expire with them, but passed into other hands. The pastors, and teachers, and rulers, who existed in the primitive times, and can never be wanting, without the dissolution of the church as an organized body, were appointed by the Apostles. They were set apart to their office, and through them, as the channel in which power was conveyed to them from Christ, the source of all spiritual gifts and privileges.

This is the channel of transmission which was established in the beginning. As we are reasoning with Independents, who pretend to pay a more sacred regard to Scripture than other denominations of Christians, we confidently appeal to it, and ask, whether they can deny the statement now made, or show that the original order has been changed? Is it not true, that the Apostles derived their power immediately from Jesus Christ? Is it not true, that the first ministers and rulers of the church derived their authority from the Apostles? And can any passage be produced reversing this order, and ordaining that, in the subsequent ages, official power should flow from the people? The first governors of the church were not created by it, but received their official character before its erection. They did not, as in other voluntary societies, exercise a portion of power which the society had delegated to them. Their power came directly from heaven, and was given to them, that they might organize the society, and govern the members; not by laws of their own making, but by a code stamped with the authority of the King of Zion. In the New Testament, the people are known, not as rulers, but as subjects. It is acknowledged, that it recognizes a right in the people to interfere in the appointment of their office-bearers, to a certain extent. In many churches, they have been deprived of that right; but in the days of the Apostles, and for a long time after, they possessed and exercised the privilege of electing the persons who were

\* Matth. xxviii. 20.

to preside over them in the Lord. But the limits of this right are defined with the greatest exactness; so as to show that it does not recognize any portion of authority as vested in the people, and far less represents them as the depositaries of all ecclesiastical power. The account which Luke gives of the election of deacons, is so expressed, as if it had been intended to guard against the principles of Independents: "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."\* The people were called upon to choose persons whom they judged to be qualified, and in whom they could confide; and it was the more necessary that they should be consulted in the election, because there had been dissatisfaction in consequence of the former management of the poor. This, however, was a simple nomination, and here their power terminated. They could not invest the persons with the office, and give them authority to discharge its duties. This was the prerogative of the Apostles; it was their province to "appoint them over this business." In other words, it appears from this account, that official power is not derived from the people, but from those who are already in office.

I shall here quote a passage from the writing of the celebrated Dr. Owen, who was an Independent, but has admitted principles on the subject of church government, which are more congenial to the views of a professed Presbyterian. In his *True Nature of a Gospel Church*, after having shown that Christ has instituted offices in his church; that he qualifies persons for them; that he communicates power to them by their call and ordination, and commands the church to be subject to them; he adds, "By these ways and means doth the Lord Christ communicate office-power unto them that are called thereunto; whereon they become, not the officers or ministers of men, no, not of the church, as unto the actings and exercise of their authority, but only as the good and edification of the church is the end of it; but the officers and ministers of Christ himself. It is hence evident that, in the communication of church power in office, unto any persons called thereunto, the work and duty of the church consists formally in acts of obedience unto the commands of Christ. Hence, it doth not give unto such officers a power or authority which was formally and actually in the body of the community, by virtue of any grant or law of Christ, so as that they should receive and act the power of the church, by virtue of a delegation from them; but only they design, choose, and set apart the individual persons, who are thereon intrusted with office-power by Christ himself, according as was before declared. This is the power and right given unto the church, essentially considered, with respect unto their officers, namely, to design, call, choose, and set apart the persons, by the ways of Christ's appointment, unto those offices, whereunto, by his laws, he hath annexed church power and authority."† He says again, in another part of the same work, speaking of the election of the pastors and rulers by the people, "This choice or election doth not communicate a power from them that choose, unto them that are chosen, as though such a power as that whereunto they are called should be formally inherent in the choosers, antecedent unto such a choice. For this would make those that are chosen to be their ministers only, and to act all things in their name, and by virtue of authority derived from them. It is only an instrumental, ministerial means, to instate them in that power and authority which is given unto such officers by the constitution and laws of Christ, whose ministers they thereon are. These gifts, offices, and officers, being granted by Christ unto the churches, wherever there is a church called according to his mind, they do, in and by their choice of them, submit themselves unto them in the Lord, according to all the powers and duties wherewith they are by him intrusted, and whereunto they are called."‡ These quotations

\* Acts vi. 3. † Owen's *True Nature of a Gospel Church*, chap. iii. p. 39. ‡ Ib. chap. iv. p. 77.



are long, but they are important; and have the greater weight, as coming from an avowed Independent, who, in learning, piety, and profound knowledge of the Scriptures, was never surpassed by any of his brethren. They contain the essential principles of Presbytery, and show that, when such a man dispassionately examined the Scriptures, he found in them the elements of that system of government which our church has adopted.

There are other arguments by which we prove that power is not lodged in the members of the church, and by them imparted to its office-bearers; but that the latter derive it immediately from Christ. When Paul says, that Christ has given to his church "pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, and the edifying of his body,"\* it certainly would not occur to a person whose mind was not biased by previous notions, that his meaning is, that Christ has given power to the church to create such ministers by its own deed. The words would naturally suggest, that the church and the ministers are distinct from each other; that the church is merely the society for whose benefit provision was to be made; that the Head of the church has manifested his attention to its interests, by appointing persons to instruct and govern it; and that the rights and prerogatives of its office-bearers emanate directly from himself. No man, when he was told that a king had appointed the governor of the province, would conclude that the governor was appointed by the people, and possessed no power but what they had conferred upon him. "God hath set some in the church, first, Apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."† While this passage suggests that teachers are set in the church, not by the people, but by God, and the word government, which is the abstract for the concrete, imports, that there is authority to be exercised, as well as knowledge to be communicated, it is worthy of observation, that God is said to have "set *some* in the church;" not *all*, but a certain number of persons, for the various purposes mentioned. But how does this comport with the principles of Independents, according to whom all possess an original right to govern; all do actually govern, as no cause can be decided but by the suffrages of the church; and those who bear official names are, in fact, as subject to its authority as others; for as it made, so it can unmake them at its pleasure? In an Independent church all are governors, and there are none to be governed but the individuals who have done something which has brought them under the cognizance of their brethren, and exposed them to censure.

I shall only add, that the Scripture speaks of persons in the church, whom it calls pastors, overseers, leaders, elders who rule; and that it calls upon the members to "know" or acknowledge them, to "submit" to them, to "obey them," to "esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake," and to "count them worthy of double honour."‡ The titles of the office-bearers import authority; but they would be merely titles of honour and empty sounds, if all power were vested in the people, and the nominal rulers were their servants, whom they had a right to control. The duty of the people would be confined to sentiments of affection, and an external show of respect. According to the Independent system, they owe no obedience to their rulers, who are, in fact, such only in name, as the people retain the rule in their own hands. How shall they obey those who can issue no command, and submit to those who have no authority to exercise? The language of Scripture is absolutely unmeaning, if all power resides in the people; but is perfectly intelligible upon the Presbyterian plan, which clearly distinguishes between the governors and the governed.

To this reasoning, Independents oppose some passages of Scripture which seem to them to recognize a power of government and discipline in the body

\* Eph. iv. 11, 12. † 1 Cor. xii. 28. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Tim. v. 17.

of the people. Thus, our Lord says, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."\* The ultimate appeal, say Independents, is to the church, and by the assembled church the offender is judged and excommunicated. Let it be observed, that when these words were spoken, the Christian church was not founded; and that, consequently, they would have been unintelligible to the disciples, unless they had alluded to some mode of proceeding with which they were acquainted. Now, I think that no dispassionate person can doubt that the allusion is to the Jewish synagogue, the constitution of which bore a close resemblance to that of a Presbyterian congregation. It was composed of two classes of persons,—the people, who met together to hear the law read and expounded, and the rulers, who presided over this assembly. The latter are frequently mentioned in the New Testament; and we learn from the writings of the Jews, that their office consisted in teaching and governing, and that the government comprehended the regulation of all the ordinary proceedings of the synagogue, the care of the poor, and the judging and excommunicating of offenders. "Tell it," says Christ, "to the church," in the same way in which such cases are told to the synagogue; that is, 'bring it before the rulers of the church, that they may deal with the obstinate brother, and expel him if he will not submit.' If our Lord intended to give a rule for the future conduct of his disciples when his church should be established, he plainly signified that the mode of treating offenders should be taken from the model of the synagogue; and his words, instead of favouring the Independent notion, that the people are the depositories of power, import that it is vested in the rulers alone, and that to them exclusively the government belongs. Thus the passage is in unison with those from which it has appeared, that the keys of the kingdom of heaven were granted to the Apostles, and their successors in the care of the church.†

The other passage which seems to recognize the power of the people, is in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, when, speaking of the incestuous person, the Apostle commands them, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when they were gathered together, and his spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver him unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh."‡ And in the second Epistle, he speaks of this punishment as "having been inflicted by many."§ It is worthy of attention, that from this case, which was evidently peculiar, no legitimate inference can be drawn respecting the ordinary procedure of the church. The Corinthians had neglected to do their duty, and Paul, interposing by his apostolical authority, pronounced a sentence, and called upon them to execute it. It was Paul, and not the Corinthians, who excommunicated the incestuous man; and their office consisted in publishing the sentence in their assembly, and acting conformably to it, by excluding him from their fellowship. There is no recognition of power in that church to judge and censure; their business was merely ministerial. This I consider as the proper explanation of the passage, which, thus viewed, gives no countenance to Independents. The common answer, however, is satisfactory; that, on the supposition that the sentence was pronounced by the Corinthians, the address to the whole church does not necessarily imply that they were all judicially concerned, because there are many examples of addresses to a whole society or people, when only a part is intended, or only the rulers. The congregation of Israel

\* Matth. xviii. 15—17.

† 1 Cor. v. 4.

‡ Vitringa de Synagogo Vetere, 96. 734.

§ 2 Cor. ii. 6.



is said to have done what was certainly done only by persons in authority, and the people are spoken to as chargeable with sins which their rulers alone had committed. In such cases, we must ascertain from circumstances what persons are meant; and the case before us must be explained consistently with other passages which appropriate power to the governors of the church. At the same time, it should be remembered that all the members of the church had a part to act in the excommunication of the offender, not however as judges; but they were all bound to concur in the sentence, and to testify their approbation of it by refusing to associate with him. Thus the punishment was, in the most emphatic sense, inflicted by many.

I proceed to consider the last principle of Independency, That all acts of government are performed in a single congregation, ultimately, and without appeal to a superior assembly. Presbyterians maintain that there is a subordination of courts, and a right of appeal from an inferior to a superior court. This seems to be a fair deduction from what we have already established concerning the union of several congregations in one church. Being separate assemblies, each of which possesses its own rulers, they can be considered as one only, because they are united under one general government; and there are two ways in which their union may be effected, namely, by their being placed under a bishop, or under a presbytery. We have proved that, in the Apostolic age, there were no bishops, in the modern sense of the word; and it follows that the Church of Jerusalem, in which there were many assemblies, was governed by the common council of its presbyters. Each assembly regulated its own ordinary affairs; but when any extraordinary case arose, or any difficulty occurred, it was referred to that council, and decided by its authority. No reasonable objection can be made to this view of the subject; and if it be admitted to be just, the principle must be given up that a single congregation possesses in itself all the powers of government, and is independent of all other congregations in the world.

This argument would hold good although we should not be able to produce from Scripture, proof of an appeal from an inferior to a superior court. But Presbyterians think that they are furnished with an example in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, and that, by the transaction there recorded, the lawfulness of courts of review is clearly established. I shall examine that passage of Scripture; and show you what countenance it gives to the plan of ecclesiastical government which we have adopted.

Some persons from Judea had taught the brethren in Antioch, that "unless they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved."\* As this doctrine was subversive of the gospel, Paul and Barnabas opposed them, and much contention ensued. It was found impossible to settle the controversy, even by the authority of Paul, to whom the false teachers refused to submit; and it was therefore determined to refer it to the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem. Besides, it was not a local controversy, arising from the peculiar circumstances of the place, but might be agitated in any other city or district where the Jews resided; and for this reason, prudence required that it should be finally decided in a higher assembly than that of the rulers of Antioch, an assembly which would command the respect and obedience of all the churches in the world. There is no doubt that it might have been determined in Antioch, in which, besides Paul and Barnabas, both men of high rank in the church, there were prophets and teachers competent to manage such affairs; but the opposing party was refractory, and there was no hope of reducing them to silence except by the sentence of a court from which there was no appeal.

It was resolved that "Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and elders about this question."†

\* Acts xv. 1.

† Ib. 2.

Whether these were delegates from the other churches of Syria, and from those of Cilicia, in which this controversy was agitated, does not appear. If it should be denied that any such were present, because no specific mention is made of them, those who are most concerned to prove their absence, lest the meeting in Jerusalem should turn out to be a representative assembly, will be involved in an inextricable difficulty. It is evident, that in the present case, there was not merely a reference for advice, but submission to a sentence: and how the elders of Jerusalem could have a right to legislate for the church of Antioch, it is impossible for Independents upon their own principles to explain. One Independent church may apply to another for advice, but it still retains the power to receive or reject it. The church to which the application is made, may give counsel to the other, but has no authority to enforce it. We shall find that something very different took place on the occasion now before us.

It has been said that the reason for referring this cause to the Church of Jerusalem, was that the Apostles were there, who were inspired men, and could decide this question by infallible authority, and that this was the ground of the submission of other churches to their sentence. But this supposition is of no avail to the cause of Independency, because it appears not to be founded in truth. First, if it had been the wish of the Church of Antioch, that the dispute should be terminated by the authority of inspiration, there was no reason for sending to Jerusalem, as Paul was among them, who was not behind the chief of the Apostles, and Barnabas, who was endowed with supernatural gifts; and there were also prophets, as we are informed in the fourteenth chapter, who enjoyed the miraculous assistance of the Spirit. Their decision would have been infallible, and it would have been the duty of all parties to acquiesce in it. Secondly, if it should be said, that although there were inspired men in Antioch, yet parties had run so high, and such prejudices had been conceived, that a decision there would not have had the effect to settle the peace of the church, and that this was the cause of the reference to Jerusalem; I observe, that while this is probably a true statement of the case, there is no evidence that the reference was made to the Apostles as infallible judges. The reason of this allegation is, that it was made at the same time to the elders who were not inspired. If the Apostles were consulted as oracles, why were the elders also consulted who were not oracles? What right had they to interfere in a sentence proceeding from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost? Were the Christians in Antioch so ignorant, as to confound two classes of persons totally dissimilar, and to assign to both equal authority? If the Apostles spoke by inspiration, the elders must have been silent, and they had only to submit, like the parties who had made the appeal. Nothing however is more evident than that the elders were considered as judges, as well as the Apostles. Thirdly, when the question came to be discussed, the assembly proceeded not in the way of authority, but by reasoning. No person rose and pronounced an oracular sentence; but first one Apostle stood up, and then another, and drew from passages of Scripture a conclusion in which all present acquiesced. The business was conducted in the same manner as in other assemblies. Every member had liberty to give his opinion, and that which was supported by solid arguments was adopted.

But although the Christians of Antioch did not send to Jerusalem, to obtain a decision of the question by inspiration, they sought something more than an advice. They submitted the controversy to an authority in which they were bound to acquiesce; and, accordingly, the assembly did not give them a counsel, but issued a *decree*; so their sentence is called in the next chapter, and the word thus translated is the same which is used to express the authoritative mandates of superiors. The decree of Cæsar Augustus that all the world



should be taxed, is called by the same name, *δογμα*; and it is twice employed to denote the ordinances of the Mosaic law. The matters contained in the decree are termed necessary things, things which the churches were not simply advised, but commanded to observe. The obligation of the decree upon the Christians of Antioch, and not upon them alone, but upon all the churches of Syria and Cilicia, and throughout the world, could not arise from the authority of the elders of Jerusalem, even although it had been strengthened by the suffrages of the people, according to the principles of either Independents or Presbyterians. Neither will acknowledge the right of one church to dictate to another, its equal in power and privileges. And the eagerness of Independents to make us believe, that the question was determined in a church meeting, in their sense of the term, only serves to embarrass them the more; for how could the members of one church issue a decree, which should be binding upon all Christian churches? The fact, however, presents no difficulty to us. There were present on this occasion, not only the elders of Jerusalem, but probably deputies from the other churches, which were interested in the controversy; and some suppose these to be meant by the brethren, mentioned in the superscription of the decree. As this point is doubtful, I shall not insist upon it, nor is it necessary to the argument. Besides the elders, the Apostles were members of the council, and their presence was sufficient to constitute it an Ecumenical one, and to render its decrees universally binding. We have, indeed, said that they did not act by inspiration in pronouncing the sentence; but they did not therefore sink down to a level with the other members. Although they reasoned in concert with them, and on other occasions assumed the designation of presbyters or elders, and joined with the ordinary pastors and rulers in administering the affairs of the church, they never did nor could divest themselves of their apostolical character. They had at all times the care of all the churches, and on every public occasion, acted in behalf of them all. In this council they were considered as Apostles; and consequently, if deputies from other churches were not present, the Apostles supplied their place, being the representatives of the Catholic Church. Thus the meeting in Jerusalem became a general council, which had a right to give law to the disciples of Christ in every region of the earth.

It is objected by Independents, that this meeting did not resemble a Presbyterian synod, in which only ministers and elders have a right to deliberate and judge; for that the people also took a part in the business. "The Apostles and elders with the whole church, were pleased to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch;" the letter is superscribed by "the Apostles, elders, and brethren," and "all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul." But "the multitude" can mean only the people who had convened to witness the proceedings, and who listened to the narrative with profound attention. The "whole church," or the whole assembly, must signify only the persons present, who could be but a part of the church properly so called, which we have seen consisted of many thousands; and consequently, even upon the principles of Independents, they have no judicial authority. The "brethren" have been understood to be other ministers of the word; but, admitting that they were the people, we can rationally conceive nothing more to be intended, than that they concurred in the decree, and signified their consent to the foreign churches as a means of obtaining their acquiescence; in the same manner as the laity were sometimes permitted, in ancient times, to subscribe the decrees of councils, in order to testify their approbation of them.\* This is the conclusion to which we must come, if we attentively and candidly consider the whole history of this meeting, and would render one part consistent with another. The reference from Antioch was not made to the whole body of be-

\* Grotii Annotat. ad Acta Apostol. xv. 22.

lievers in Jerusalem, but to the Apostles and elders; it is expressly stated that "the Apostles and elders came together to consider the matter," and the multitude are only incidentally mentioned as present; and, although the brethren are conjoined with them in the beginning of the letter sent to the churches, yet when delivered to them, it is called the decree, exclusively of the Apostles and elders. It is worthy of attention, too, that we do not find a single member of the church taking part in the discussion. From these particulars, it seems to be a necessary conclusion, that the people had no concern in the discussion and determination of the question; and that, although the church and the brethren are afterwards brought forward to view, their appearance being posterior to the sentence, can reasonably be understood to import only their approbation of it. This explanation will recommend itself to a candid inquirer, because it harmonizes the different parts of the narrative; whereas, the opposite opinion represents Luke as writing in a careless and inaccurate manner, while, in the successive steps of the process, he studiously excludes the people from the office of judges, and then abruptly admits them at the close.

If any of you should be of opinion that the assembly in Jerusalem has not been proved to be conformable in every point to a Presbyterian synod, we would say to him, that we do not pretend to trace a perfect similarity, but that we have established the principle upon which such synods are founded. There was, in this case, a reference from an inferior to a superior assembly, and the design was to obtain, not a simple advice, but an authoritative decision. We have, therefore, apostolical example for courts of review. The transaction clearly recognizes the system of subordination, and justifies the transference of a cause from the consistory, or session of a particular congregation to a presbytery, and from a presbytery to an assembly of presbyteries, which the Greeks call a synod, and the Latins a council. And thus we have disproved the last principle of Independency, that all acts of government are performed in a single congregation, ultimately, and without appeal.

The advantage, and even the necessity of courts of review have been acknowledged by some enlightened Independents; and Dr. Owen, the brightest ornament of the party, has not hesitated to declare, that a church, meaning a single congregation, cannot always perform its duty to Christ and the Catholic Church by its intrinsic powers; that, in attempting to do so, it cuts itself off from the communion of the church universal, and that it would not be safe for any man to commit himself to its care.\* When this passage was, sometime ago, brought under the notice of the public,† it gave great offence to Independents, who were not aware that it was to be found in his writings, and would willingly, if they could, have disputed its genuineness, because it aims a mortal blow at their scheme. But so he thought, and so every man who takes a dispassionate view of the subject will think. Modern Independents partially acknowledge its truth in their practice, for the associations which are generally established among them, are an imitation of our presbyteries and synods. They profess, indeed, to have no authority over the churches, of the delegates from which they are composed, and to meet solely to consult about their affairs, and to give them an advice; but the power which they disclaim in words, they exercise in fact; for, if any church does not consent to what has been agreed upon, it is, I understand, cut off from their communion.

There are some weighty objections which may be urged against the Independent system. First, It destroys the visible unity of the church, by frittering it away into a multitude of little societies, separate and unconnected. It is a matter of lamentation to good men, that Christians are divided into so many parties, which have no intercourse with each other; but this state of things is the consequence of imperfect views of the truth, of prejudice, passion,

\* Owen's True Nature of a Gospel Church, chap. xi. † Lectures on the Acts, lect. xvi.



and secular interests; and all acknowledge that it is not as it ought to be. But Independency upon principle parcels out the followers of Christ into distinct portions, and pronounces their incorporation into one body to be contrary to Scripture. Instead of exhibiting the church as the one kingdom of Christ, it distributes it into an endless variety of little republics. Secondly, It lodges the power of managing the affairs of the church in incompetent hands. Men may be qualified to be members of a Christian society, who are altogether unfit to be rulers. The grace of God may exist in a mind which has received no culture from education, and is very scantily endowed with natural gifts. A person may know the truth by Divine illumination, so as to believe and love it, and may know the wickedness and deceitfulness of his own heart, who is very imperfectly acquainted with the characters, and tempers, and ways of men. There is an absurdity in supposing that day-labourers, who perhaps can hardly read; domestic servants, who are so much engaged from morning to night, that they can, with difficulty, find time to look into the Bible; and women, living in a state of seclusion, or holding intercourse only with persons as ill-informed as themselves, are proper persons to discuss and determine the intricate cases which may come before a church. The Presbyterian plan is evidently more rational, which commits the government to the ministers of Christ, and elders chosen for their superior knowledge, and prudence, and experience. Lastly, It provides no means for determining controversies. If the members of an Independent congregation differ in opinion, they must wrangle on without the prospect of an end, or must withdraw from each other, and set up separate churches. In this way their disputes frequently terminate, and not seldom they have kept their churches in an agitated state for many weeks and months. In our church courts, unanimity is more likely to be obtained; if the decision of one court does not give satisfaction, a cause can be brought under the review of another. There is, besides, a greater probability of candid investigation and impartial decision, as the judges are not immediately interested; and while all questions are submitted to the rulers, the minds of the members are left in peace.

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## LECTURE C.

### ON THE CHURCH.

**Rulers of the Church.**—Extraordinary Office-Bearers: Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists.—  
 Ordinary Office-Bearers: Pastor; His Duties:—Teacher or Doctor; His Duties:—Deacons:—  
 Ruling Elders; Warrant for them; Their Duties.

I HAVE endeavoured to show you, from the Scriptures, what form of government Jesus Christ has prescribed to his church, and it has appeared, I trust, that we find in them the outlines of the Presbyterian plan. It is acknowledged that it is not so fully detailed as the plan given to the Jewish Church, which contains a minute account of the tabernacle, of its services, of the persons who alone had a right to minister in it, and, in short, of every thing which related to religion: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."\* This is the reason that there have been so many disputes

\* Heb. viii. 5.

upon the subject. As only general principles are laid down, they have been viewed in different lights, and men have reared upon them different superstructures. But if the principles are clear, they furnish a rule to guide us in the development of the system; and the scheme which we have adopted, is, I think, fairly deduced from them, in all its ramifications.

I now proceed to lay before you a short account of the persons whom Christ has appointed to administer this government. The Apostle Paul has given an enumeration of them in the Epistle to the Ephesians; which, however, is not complete, because there are two orders which he has omitted, but which are mentioned in other passages of the New Testament: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."\* They are divided into two classes, the extraordinary and the ordinary office-bearers of the church. In the first class are included apostles, prophets, and evangelists; and we call them extraordinary, not only because they were endowed with supernatural gifts, but because they were instituted only for a time. They were ordained to serve a particular purpose, namely, the establishment of the Christian church; and when this design was accomplished, their offices ceased. The ordinary office-bearers of the church are pastors and teachers, and to these must be added ruling elders and deacons.

The apostles stand first in the catalogue, and they hold the highest rank among the ministers of the church. The word signifies a messenger, a person sent to execute a commission. In this sense it was used by the Greeks, and it occurs also in some places of the New Testament: "The servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent—*αποστολος*—greater than he that sent him."† Paul, speaking to the Corinthians, of certain brethren who had been deputed to receive the collections for the saints, calls them *αποστολοι εκκλησιων*, "the messengers" or "apostles of the churches."‡ The same title is given to Jesus Christ himself, who is called "the Apostle of our profession,"§ because he was sent by the Father to publish the religion which we profess; and hence he said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me."|| In the same general sense the term is applied to the twelve disciples, who are known by the designation of Apostles; but it is, at the same time, expressive of something peculiar respecting them.

We may remark, in the first place, that they received their commission immediately from Jesus Christ himself, first during his personal ministry, when he sent them to publish the good news of the kingdom throughout the land of Judea;¶ and again after his ascension, when he commanded them to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."\*\* With respect to Paul, who was afterwards added to the number, he is careful to inform us, that his commission was of the same nature with that of his brethren: "Paul, an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead."†† The case of Matthias, who was nominated by the Apostles to fill up the place of Judas, is not an exception; for a direct appeal was made to Christ; and after prayer, the lot fell upon him.‡‡ Secondly, it was an indispensable qualification of an Apostle that he should have been an eye and an ear witness of the actions and sayings of Christ, and that he should have seen him after his resurrection, as we learn from the words of Peter, when they were deliberating about a successor to Judas.§§ Paul, indeed, was not in all respects so qualified; but what was essential was supplied by the personal appearance of our Saviour to him, and the revelation with

\* Eph. iv. 11, 12.

† John xiii. 16.

‡ 2 Cor. viii. 23.

§ Heb. iii. 1.

¶ John vii. 16.

† Matth. x. 5.

\*\* Mark xvi. 15.

†† Gal. i. 1.

‡‡ Acts i. 24, 26.

§§ Ib. i. 21, 22.



which he was favoured: "Have not I seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"\* Thirdly, They were endowed with supernatural gifts, with a complete and infallible knowledge of the gospel; a power to speak languages which they had not learned; to work miracles; to discern spirits; and in all these ways, to give full proof of their commission. They were authorized to preach to Jews and to Gentiles; to found the Christian Church; to instruct and govern it; to order all its affairs, independently of any human controul; and to provide for its well-being and continuance, by appointing office-bearers to administer the ordinances, and to perform all the services which would conduce to its peace and spiritual prosperity. Their doctrine and commands were the rule to the church during their life, and their writings are the standard of faith and practice to all succeeding ages. They left no successors in their extraordinary prerogatives, and their office expired with them.

The next in order were the prophets. The word prophet bears various senses in the Scriptures. It sometimes signifies merely a person who speaks in the name of another, as Aaron is called the prophet of Moses,† because he delivered to the people the messages which Moses had received from God. At other times, it denotes a person who, by the assistance of the Spirit, explained the prophecies of the Old Testament; and there is reason to believe that there are several instances of this use of it in the New Testament. The prophets there mentioned, did not always foretell future events, but edified the church by interpreting the ancient predictions. They are not, however, to be viewed as exactly on a level with the commentators of modern times. They were supernaturally assisted, and were infallible guides in the application of the Scriptures to Jesus Christ, and the new dispensation. Their office must have been productive of great benefit to the primitive church, when the Messiahship of Christ was the grand subject of controversy between the Jews and the Christians, and the faith of the latter so much depended upon the proof, that all the circumstances descriptive of the promised Redeemer, were realized in the person and history of Jesus of Nazareth. Our Lord opened the understandings of his disciples to understand the Scriptures, and he imparted the same knowledge to those inspired expounders of prophecy. In strict language, a prophet signifies a person who, by the Holy Spirit, foretells future events. Such, unquestionably, were some of the prophets in the primitive church. This is evident from the eleventh chapter of the Acts, where we read, that "in those days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them, named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world; which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar."‡ Here an event was predicted which could not have been foreseen by human sagacity, because the natural causes of it were not then in operation. The other prophets from Jerusalem were of the same class; for Agabus is said to be one of them, and, therefore, to have exercised no power which was not possessed by them in common. The gift of prophecy might be subservient to the immediate advantage of the church, as in the case before us it gave warning to the disciples to make provision for their poor brethren against the approaching calamity; and it contributed, with other supernatural endowments, to establish their faith, as an evidence of the presence of God with his servants.

The last extraordinary office-bearers in the primitive church were Evangelists. There is an application of this word which is not authorized by Scripture, but is in common use, and has been inadvertently supposed to be one of its original meanings. It is the well known designation of the writers of the four gospels. It acquired this sense at a period posterior to the Apostolic age, and points out, not the official character of the persons to whom it is given,

\* 1 Cor. ix. 1.

† Exod. vii. 1.

‡ Acts xi. 27, 28.

out the subject of their books. Mark calls his narrative, *το εὐαγγέλιον Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*.\* The Evangelists of whom we now speak, were persons holding a high rank in the primitive church. Besides the passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians, already quoted, the word occurs in some other places. In the twenty-first chapter of the Acts, mention is made of Philip the Evangelist, and Timothy is exhorted to “do the work of an Evangelist.”† Titus appears to have been invested with the same office, and so were probably Silas and Mark, who were companions of Paul in his journeys and labours, and Barnabas, who is also called an apostle, in the general sense of a messenger or missionary, and seems to have been more than an ordinary minister of the word. The peculiar duties of an Evangelist are not defined in the New Testament; but they are generally understood to have been materially the same with those of an Apostle. The Evangelist was not confined to a particular congregation, like the pastor afterwards mentioned; but had a general commission to preach the gospel wherever an opportunity presented itself. He had power to ordain elders in any city, and to set in order the affairs of the churches which he visited; to correct what was amiss, and to supply what was wanting. We do not know that he enjoyed the general gift of inspiration, as the Apostles did; and it is probable that he did not, from the cases of Timothy and Titus, to whom Paul deemed it necessary to give instructions concerning their conduct. It may be presumed, that the honour of revealing the doctrines of the gospel, and delivering the commands and institutions of Christ to the church, was reserved to the Apostles; and that, by this prerogative, they were elevated above all the extraordinary office-bearers. We may suppose, however, that certain supernatural endowments were conferred upon an Evangelist, as the gift of tongues, and the power of working miracles, to authenticate his commission, and to enable him to discharge his duty among different nations. Evangelists were assistants of the Apostles, inferior to them in rank, and subject to their authority. Paul speaks to Timothy and Titus as their superior, and lays injunctions upon them, with which they were bound to comply, the Apostles were in number twelve, or rather thirteen, after Paul was added to them. Although they separated from one another, and chose different countries as the scene of their labours, and although they were unweariedly diligent in the work of their office; yet, when we consider how extensive was the range of their ministrations, we are sensible that, in most cases, they could do little more than found churches in particular places. If circumstances sometimes required that they should continue longer in a place, as we find Paul doing in Corinth and in Ephesus, other churches were deprived of the benefit of their presence. Infant societies, the members of which had been recently converted from Judaism and heathenism, were but imperfectly acquainted with the religion which they had embraced; and, being exposed to many difficulties and temptations, stood in need of more frequent and lasting visits than the numerous demands upon the attention of the Apostles would afford. Hence arose the order of Evangelists. They followed the Apostles, to carry on what the latter had begun. They went to those places where their presence was most wanted, and probably regulated their movements according to the direction of the Apostles. Paul, when he departed from Ephesus, besought Timothy to remain behind, that he might oppose certain false teachers; and he left Titus in Crete, “that he might set in order the things which were wanting.”‡

The extraordinary office-bearers of the church were apostles, prophets, and evangelists. We now proceed to consider the second class, which comprehends those who are to continue in the church to the end of the world. When the church had been founded by the preaching of the Apostles, regulated by the wisdom given to them, and established by their care, and

\* Mark i. 1.

† 2 Tim. iv. 5.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 3. Tit. i. 5.



the ministrations of prophets and evangelists; persons of an inferior character, possessed only of the common gifts of the Spirit, and guided by the instructions and rules which the Apostles have left, were sufficient to carry on the work of converting sinners, and building up saints in faith and holiness.

I shall speak of the ordinary office-bearers of the church.

The first are called Pastors. The word literally signifies a shepherd who has the care of a flock. It is here used in a metaphorical sense, and such use is not uncommon in profane writers. Homer, for example, calls kings ποιμένες λαών, *shepherds of the people*. It is applied to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is denominated "the chief Shepherd," and "the great Shepherd of the sheep;"\* and to men who minister in holy things,† because he has delegated to them a portion of his authority, and they are employed in the same work. They are also styled ministers of Christ,‡ and the two titles may be used indiscriminately. It is therefore affectation in some sects to adhere rigidly to the former designation, always speaking of the pastors of their churches, as if the latter were not equally scriptural, especially as there is still another term sanctioned by the Apostles, namely bishops or overseers.

Two ideas are suggested by the designation of Pastors. It is the duty of those to whom it belongs, to feed and to govern the church. With respect to the first, we hear Paul saying to the elders of Ephesus, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."§ As it is the office of a shepherd to provide proper pasture for his flock, and to lead them to it, so it is incumbent upon the minister of Christ to make provision for the nourishment of the souls of his people; and as it is only the truth which will sustain and strengthen spiritual life, he ought to "feed them with wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness." He is not appointed to instruct them in the arts and sciences, in agriculture and commerce, or in mere morality, as it is exhibited independently of religion in the systems of philosophers; but to preach the gospel in the most extensive sense of the term, to explain its doctrines, to propound its promises, to inculcate its precepts, to bring its motives to bear upon the consciences and hearts of his hearers. With careful attention to their different characters, and circumstances, and feelings, he must rightly divide the word of truth, not publishing it at random, but having a regard to the varieties among men in respect of their moral state, their duties, their temptations, and their difficulties, that each individual may receive his portion of food in due season. The general design of his office is also promoted by the administration of the sacraments, and particularly of the Lord's supper, the very name of which is significant of its fitness to impart nourishment to the soul. Thus, through the divine blessing, the people upon whom he bestows his labour will grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and the faithful minister will be indeed the pastor of his flock.

It belongs to the office of the pastor, not only to feed, but to govern the flock, as the shepherd regulates the movements of the sheep. "The good shepherd," says our Lord, "goeth before the sheep, and they follow him, for they know his voice."|| The Christian pastor should lead his flock in the right way, by instruction and by example; but this is not the whole of his office. He is invested with authority over them, to keep them in the right way, and to bring them back when they have wandered from it. He has power to reprove, and rebuke, and exhort, and to suffer no man to despise him. The church being an organized body, the peace and prosperity of which cannot be maintained without an observance of its laws, it pertains to those who are set over it, not only to inculcate the duty of the members, but to enforce

\* 1 Pet. v. 4. Heb. xiii. 20.  
§ Acts xx. 28.

† Eph. iv. 11.  
|| John x. 4.

‡ 1 Cor. iv. 1. 2 Cor. xi. 23.

it by all means corresponding with the voluntary and spiritual nature of the society. While the ministers of religion ought to watch over the people with affectionate solicitude, they have a commission from Jesus Christ to call upon them to walk according to the gospel, to censure them when they deviate from this rule, and to exclude those who will not be reclaimed. This power, however, is not vested exclusively in them, but in other governors of whom we shall afterwards speak; and it is evidently a power given to them, not for destruction, but for edification. Its object is to maintain the respect which is due to the institutions of Christ, to secure the consistent and seemly conduct of his professed disciples, to guard the privileges of the church against abuse, and to make an open distinction between the pure and the impure.

It is evident that the duties of the pastoral office may be performed, without the supernatural endowments which were bestowed upon apostles, prophets, and evangelists. The qualifications of a bishop, which are enumerated in the First Epistle to Timothy, are such as may be found in a person who possesses only the gifts of nature, improved by education and experience, and sanctified by grace. But it is not on this account alone that we rank pastors among the ordinary office-bearers in the church. Besides that no new effusion of the Holy Spirit, like that on the day of Pentecost, is necessary, and a sufficient number of able ministers will be regularly furnished in the common course of things, the circumstances of the church evidently require that their office should be continued throughout successive generations. As in the beginning Christianity was new both to Jews and to Gentiles, converts could not be supposed at once to acquire a perfect acquaintance with it; and many years elapsed before all the books of the New Testament were written, and came into general use. On these accounts it may seem that there was then a peculiar reason for the institution of the ministry. But its utility, or I may rather say its necessity, is manifest even in the present times, when the system of divine truth is accessible to private study, and is in some degree rendered familiar by early instruction. Still great ignorance prevails from various causes, and however plain are those parts of the Scriptures, the knowledge of which is essential to salvation, preparatory education is requisite to the full exposition of it; and to many even its simplest truths would be unknown, if they never heard them in the church. Besides, the ministry of the word is not designed solely to tell what is new, but to bring old truths into view, and to impress them upon the heart; to give line upon line and precept upon precept; and it is one of the means which Jesus Christ has appointed for communicating his Spirit to illuminate and sanctify the soul. It is therefore a permanent institution; it will continue "till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."\*

With pastors, Paul joins teachers in his enumeration of the office-bearers of the church. That these are not the same persons, as some might suppose, is evident from this consideration, that we have no reason to think that two words would have been employed to describe them, especially as the word, pastors, implies teaching, or the feeding of the flock by instruction. It is probable that a distinct class is pointed out, as many commentators think, and our church affirms. In the form of church government, there is a chapter entitled the Teacher or Doctor, which begins with these words: "The Scripture doth hold out the name and title of teacher, as well as of the pastor;" and after giving an account of his office, it concludes thus: "A teacher or doctor is of most excellent use in schools and universities, as of old in the schools of the prophets, and at Jerusalem, where Gamaliel and others taught as doctors." In the description of the office, it is too much confounded with that

\* Eph. iv. 13.



of the pastor, while the power of administering the sacrament is assigned to the teacher; and he is represented as differing from the pastor, not properly in office, but in the nature of his gifts, being one "who doth more excel in exposition of the Scriptures, in teaching sound doctrine, and in convincing gainsayers, than he doth in application, and is accordingly employed therein." With all deference to the compilers of this part of our standards, I would say that this account is not very accurate. While it distinguishes between the pastor and doctor, it makes them virtually the same. In fact, the doctor has all the powers of a pastor, and differs from him only in his aptness for a particular part of the pastoral office. The distinction is not of office, but of qualifications. The doctor, I apprehend, was different from the pastor, and had a different province assigned to him. His business was not to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, but to instruct the young, and candidates for baptism, and those who, having been lately received into the church, were not yet fully initiated into the knowledge of religion. We know that, in the first ages, there were schools attached to certain churches, in which such persons were placed under the care of a teacher appointed by proper authority. There was a school of this nature in Alexandria, in which the celebrated Origen presided for a time. Similar schools were established in other places, as Rome, Antioch, Cæsarea, &c. There is probably a reference to the doctor in the following passage: "Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things;"\* or, "let the catechumen;"—so those were called who were in a course of religious instruction,—“let the catechumen communicate to the catechist.” We have no such person now in the church. Our schoolmasters, although they were under the superintendence of the rulers of a congregation, do not answer to the title; first, because they are not exclusively engaged in teaching the principles of religion; and, secondly, because they are not ecclesiastical officers, but belong to the laity. Doctors are not so necessary at present as they were in the primitive times, when Christianity was new, and the church was daily receiving accessions of converts from heathenism and Judaism, who needed to be prepared for admission by private instruction. Religious education may now be intrusted to parents and common teachers, aided by the personal diligence of young persons, and the attention which pastors are able to pay to them.

I proceed to speak of Deacons, of whose institution we have an account in the sixth chapter of the Acts: "When the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."† A complaint was made to the Apostles, who, in order to remedy the evil, commanded the disciples to look out among them seven men, duly qualified, whom they might appoint over this business. This was the origin of deacons, of whom mention is made in other places of the New Testament, and their qualifications are described. They were chosen to manage the affairs of the poor, to receive the contributions made for their use, to distribute them to the proper persons, and, no doubt, to accompany their acts of charity with exhortations and prayers. Their duty is expressed by the Apostles, when they say, "It is not meet that we should leave the word of God and serve tables."‡ These words have been understood to mean, that they were to serve the table of the poor, and the table of the Lord; and this commentary occurs in many books; but it is inaccurate, as it is evident from the whole transaction that only the table of the poor is intended. It is true, indeed, that, as the design of the institution was not to divert the attention of the Apostles from the ministry of the word, the care of all temporal matters in which the church is concerned, may be considered as belonging to deacons; but they were specially appointed solely for the poor. In

\* Gal. vi. 6.

† Acts vi. 1.

‡ Acts vi. 2.

some parts of the church, the office of deacon is retained, but in others it is not; and the want of it has been represented as a criminal omission. But the institution arose out of particular circumstances, and may therefore be dispensed with where these do not exist. In some congregations, there are no poor; in others, they are very few in number; and where they most abound, they can be attended to by the elders, whom we acknowledge as office-bearers in the church, as we shall afterwards see; and who, on the principle that an inferior office is comprehended in a superior, possess the powers of deacons, as ministers possess the powers of elders. This is our apology for not having deacons in all our congregations, and it seems to be satisfactory. They are not appointed, because all that they could do can be done by the elders, without encroaching upon their other duties.

The deacons of an Independent church, seem to have a general care of the members, and resemble our elders, as far as is consistent with the principle that all are rulers. But when they assign to them any other power than that of taking care of the poor, they deviate from the original institution; and while they deny that there is any warrant in Scripture for our elders, we may confidently reply that, at any rate, deacons as constituted by them are equally unscriptural. Apostolical deacons had no inspection of the church; their business was with the poor, and with the poor alone.

The last class of office-bearers in the church, consists of Ruling Elders; in speaking of whom it will be necessary to enter into greater detail, as the divine institution of such persons is controverted, by Episcopalians, who deem it incongruous that laymen, as they call them, should be admitted to any share in the government of the church; and by Independents, who maintain that the Scriptures make mention of no other offices besides pastors except deacons. It is acknowledged, that our information respecting the latter is more explicit and ample, as we have not only an account of their institution, but a description, in another place, of their qualifications. Still, however, we believe that there is a warrant for ruling elders, because there are some passages in which they appear to be distinctly recognized.

The first passage which I shall quote, is in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us; whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."\* It is the opinion of many commentators, that prophesying, which sometimes signifies public teaching by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and ministry, are general divisions under which the different offices of the church are arranged: that prophesying comprehends teaching and exhorting; and ministry, giving, ruling, and showing mercy. At any rate, it is plain that ruling is distinguished from teaching, exhorting, and giving, or from the peculiar work of the pastor, the doctor, and the deacon. The original term, *προϊστάμενος*, is properly translated, *he that ruleth*, because it evidently denotes one who presides over others with authority. This presidency is attributed to one as his proper business. It is his duty to preside or to rule, as it is the duty of another to teach, and of another to give. The Apostle is not enumerating the various duties of one individual, but different duties belonging to different individuals. Who, then, is *ὁ προϊστάμενος*? He is not the deacon, for the deacon does not rule, but gives to the poor; he is not the pastor, for, although the pastor rules, he is here characterized by teaching or exhorting, which is peculiar to him. *Ὁ προϊστάμενος* must therefore be a person whose whole duty consists in ruling, or, in other words, an elder, according to the

\* Rom. xii. 6—8.



views of Presbyterians. Some tell us, that his rule is over his family; but this is nothing to the purpose, and is a shift to get rid of a difficulty, because the Apostle is obviously speaking of the church. Others say, that he rules over the church stock; but they confound him with the deacon, who gives; and, besides, in this sense the expression would be indefinite and improper, there being nothing to determine the kind of rule to which the Apostle refers; and surely it will not be supposed that a deacon was held in such estimation in the primitive times, as to be called *ὁ προϊστάμενος* by way of eminence. There is another mode of evading the argument, by saying that the Apostle is not speaking of offices and office-bearers but of gifts. Some pains have been taken to obviate this opinion, but without any necessity, because it is manifestly unfounded; and, at any rate, it does not answer the design of those who have adopted it. Paul does indeed make mention of gifts; but he immediately proceeds to consider them as bestowed upon particular persons, and speaks of those persons as plainly as one man can speak of another. Besides, although he were speaking of gifts, the argument is of the same force as if he were speaking of persons, for gifts are bestowed upon persons for particular purposes; and if there are gifts which qualify for ruling, as there are gifts which qualify for teaching, it follows, that to rule or govern is the exclusive duty of those upon whom the former are conferred. Every unprejudiced man must perceive the truth of this reasoning, and consequently must think that the evasion mentioned above is not worthy of notice.

The next passage to which I shall direct your attention, is in the twelfth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "God hath set some in the church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."\* It does not follow, because some of the offices and ministrations enumerated in this place were miraculous and extraordinary, that they were all of that description; for we have already found apostles and prophets in the same catalogue with pastors and teachers; and we cannot be justly charged with wresting the passage from its design, when we consider it as specifying, in part, the ordinary office-bearers of the church. There are no persons who may be so reasonably supposed to be meant by helps, as deacons; and thus the word has been often explained. They were instituted for the express purpose of helping the Apostles, for the purpose of relieving them from the care of the poor, that they might devote themselves exclusively to the ministry of the word. If helps signify helpers, governments must signify governors, the abstract being in both cases put for the concrete. The question then is, Who were the governors to whom the Apostle referred? They were not the apostles, nor the prophets, nor the teachers, because they are mentioned as distinct classes. They were not helpers, because they are distinguished from them also; and besides, if deacons were intended, they could with no propriety be called governors, for deacons have no rule over the church. There is no other class of persons to whom this title, used as it is in contra-distinction to other office-bearers, will apply, but the ruling elder of Presbyterians; and it is with obvious propriety that they are designated governors, as the sole business of their office is to govern the congregation over which they are appointed. God has set some governors in the church. He has not lodged the power, as Independents suppose, in the people at large, but has ordained that a few should be invested with authority to take order that the members should walk in the ordinances and commandments of the Lord.

The last passage which I shall quote, is in the fifth chapter of the First Epistle to Timothy: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine."† Many attempts

\* Cor. xii. 28.

† 1Tim. v. 17.

have been made to evade the evidence of this passage in favour of the point which we are endeavouring to establish. It has been explained in various ways; and learned men have employed their ingenuity to prove one thing at least, that it ought not to be understood of ruling elders; but who are meant by the elders who rule well, as distinguished from those who labour in word and doctrine, they are not agreed. Their different opinions can be viewed in no other light than as conjectures. Some say that the elders who rule well are diocesan bishops, and that those who labour in word and doctrine are preaching presbyters; but besides that, contrary to their own system, they thus assign greater honour to presbyters than to bishops, we have seen that there were no such bishops in the apostolic church; and this hypothesis must be abandoned. Others tell us that the former are ordinary bishops and presbyters, and the latter evangelists; as if it had been the business of bishops and presbyters in the primitive church to rule, and of evangelists to preach, without having any concern in the government of the church. Again, it has been supposed that the rulers here mentioned are deacons; and the labourers in word and doctrine, the ministers of the word; but we have seen that deacons have nothing to do with the government of the church. Some have fancied two kinds of elders, of whom some preached the word, and administered the sacraments; while others were employed in reading the Scriptures to the people, and performing other inferior offices. But this is a gratuitous assumption, unworthy of further attention. The most extravagant idea of all, is that of the learned Mr. Mede, who contends that the elders who rule well are civil magistrates, and those who labour in word and doctrine are ministers of the Gospel.\*

These evasions being quite unsatisfactory, some have recourse to criticism, in order to wrest the passage out of our hands. First, They affirm that the adverb *μαλιστα*, translated *especially*, is not here distinctive, but descriptive; that is, it does not point out a different class, but describes with greater particularity the class mentioned in the beginning of the verse, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, particularly because they labour in word and doctrine." But the word, both in sacred and profane writers as it would be easy to show, uniformly serves to distinguish, and may be rendered, *most of all, chiefly, especially*. There is no reason why it should be translated differently in this verse, but one, which every honest critic will reject,—the interest of a party. Secondly, It has been said that the Apostle does not distinguish two classes, but refers, in the end of the verse, to those of the same class, who distinguish themselves by their diligence; and this is signified by the use of the word *κοπιωντες*, which they affirm implies *labouring with our utmost strength*. It happens unfortunately for this criticism, that the word is employed in the New Testament to express simply the duty of the servants of Christ, and not the degree of it; and, on one occasion, when Paul intended to express greater activity, he did not consider the verb *κοπιω* as sufficient to convey this idea, but joined another with it, representing Tryphena and Tryphosa as *κοπιωσας*, *labouring*, but saying of Perses, that she "laboured *much* in the Lord,"† *ἡ τις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν ἐν κυρίῳ*. As no word is added in the verse under consideration to *κοπιωντες*, it is plain that the Apostle is not speaking of uncommon diligence; and besides, it is somewhat strange to suppose that he would command the members of the church to give equal honour to all the ministers of the Gospel, although some of them were more, and others less diligent in performing their duty. Degrees of diligence certainly call for degrees of honour.

I have endeavoured to clear this passage from the attempts which have been made to pervert its meaning, and from the exceptions against our application of it. The result is, that it ought to be understood in its plain and natural

\* Mede's Works, Disc. xix. p. 71.

† Rom. xvi. 12.



meaning; and that thus viewed, it points out two classes of office-bearers who have distinct functions. It belongs to one class to rule, and in ruling their whole duty consists. They are required to do nothing more than to administer the laws of Christ for the regulation of the conduct of his followers. Those of the other class are joined with them in the rule of the church; but there is an additional duty incumbent upon them, in which the former have no concern, namely, to labour in word and doctrine, to preach the gospel, and administer the sacraments. The argument may be stated in the following manner:—There are elders, who, although they rule well, are not worthy of double honour, unless they labour in word and doctrine. But there are elders who are counted worthy of double honour, because they rule well, although they do not labour in the word and doctrine. Therefore, there are elders who are not teaching or preaching elders, that is, they are ruling elders only. The premises are clearly laid down in the passage, and the conclusion is therefore legitimate.

If there were any office in the church manifestly useless, we might confidently affirm that it is not of Divine institution. We could not, with equal confidence, pronounce an office, which appeared to us to be useful, to be divinely instituted, because we may err in our notions of utility. But the advantages resulting from the office of ruling elders are a subsidiary argument in its favour. As there can usually be only one preaching elder in a congregation, he could not perform his peculiar duties, and at the same time undertake the superintendence of the conduct of the members. Elders are his assistants in this work. Living among the people, and associating familiarly with them, they have opportunities of knowing their conduct, and can personally interpose with their counsels and admonitions; and under the joint care of the pastor and the rulers, the people grow in faith and holiness, and walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord.

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## LECTURE CI.

### ON THE CHURCH.

Church Power.—Nature of It.—Independence of the Church.—Its relation to the State.—Church Power distinguished into *POTESTAS* ἐκκλησιαστικῆς, *POTESTAS* διατακτικῆς, and *POTESTAS* διαιρητικῆς.—The Extent and Limits of these Several Kinds.

WE have seen that Jesus has established a particular form of government in the church, and has appointed certain persons to administer it. They have been distinguished into two classes; the first comprehending the extraordinary office-bearers, who ceased when the purpose of their institution was accomplished; and the second comprehending pastors and elders, who are to continue to the end of the world. I proceed to inquire with what power they are invested, and to finish what I have to say on the subject of the church.

Some have maintained that the church possesses no power, and that the office of her rulers consists solely in instructing and persuading the people. They merely propose to them truths to be believed, and duties to be practised, which they may enforce by motives calculated to impress their consciences and hearts; but they have no authority to call them to account for their conduct, and to deprive such as they deem unworthy, of their privileges. If any power of this kind is exercised in a particular church, it is conferred, according

to them, by the civil magistrate, who may appoint censures to be inflicted in particular cases for the maintenance of good order, and the advancement of the interests of morality. The author of this opinion was Erastus, a physician of the sixteenth century; from whom the doctrine, which makes the church subject to the state, and places the civil magistrate at its head, has received the name of Erastianism. It found friends and advocates; and, to a certain extent, is acted upon in the Church of England, which acknowledges the supremacy of the king in causes ecclesiastical as well as civil. It was brought forward by Erastus, and defended by his followers, as the only effectual method of putting an end to the extravagant and tyrannical power which had been claimed by the Church of Rome. This was a clumsy expedient for remedying the evil, requiring no wisdom or ingenuity; and upon the same principle, many a good thing should be destroyed because it has been abused. But, in such cases, enlightened zeal will content itself with reform; and leaving the power in existence, will employ itself in so defining it, and placing such checks upon it, as shall henceforth prevent the excesses which are the subject of complaint.

It is unnecessary to engage in the refutation of an opinion, which no person will adopt who entertains just notions of the nature and design of the church, and does not consider it merely as an appendage of the state, and a political engine. As we have already shown that a form of ecclesiastical government is appointed in the Scriptures, and that certain offices have been instituted for the management of the affairs of the church, we have virtually proved that power is committed to it; and nothing is now necessary but to ascertain what it is, and how far it extends.

Let it be observed, that it is a spiritual power, totally distinct from the civil power which is exercised in the government of cities and nations. The rule according to which it is exercised is the word of God, and not the laws of the state. The law of Jesus Christ supersedes every other law; and when these happen to interfere, the members are bound to obey God rather than men. Its object is the conscience; and its end is not gained, as in human governments, by the external obedience of the subjects, unless it proceed from a sense of the Divine authority. The means which it employs to secure obedience are, commands, entreaties, promises, threatenings, and censures; which, however, are all calculated to affect the mind only, and not the outward state. The church does not resort to confiscation of goods, imprisonment, banishment, stripes, and death, to enforce its decrees; it leaves men in full possession of their temporal privileges. The matters about which civil government is concerned, are property, liberty, personal security; the power of the church relates to instruction in heavenly mysteries, excitement to the cultivation of holiness, and preparation for the world to come. The end of civil government is to promote the peace and happiness of the present life; the end of ecclesiastical government is the edification of the body of Christ, the building up of the Saints in faith and holiness to life everlasting. Civil governments can compel their subjects to obey the laws, but the church uses no compulsion, and employs only moral means to work upon the heart.

Hence you perceive that the church is a society totally distinct from and independent of the state. Its constitution, its laws, its administration, and its objects, are different; and, although its members and the subjects of the state are the same individuals, yet they are considered as sustaining different characters, in relation to the state, as rational beings who have certain duties to perform to society; in relation to the church, as the worshippers and servants of God. The alliance of church and state, of which so much has been said, and which has been represented as necessary to the welfare of both, is always injurious to the former, when the state encroaches upon the prerogatives of the



church, or the church barter any portion of her power to secure the patronage of the state. The separate provinces of both are clearly defined; and each may exercise its peculiar functions without interfering with the other. The state can accomplish all the ends of civil government, without any other aid from the church than the influence of the doctrine which it teaches, upon the tempers and manners of the people; and the church is so far from needing the assistance of the state, that its interference would defeat the design of its institution, which is to prevail upon men by persuasion, and not by force; to inspire them with a sincere attachment to religion, not to extort a hypocritical profession of it.

When we affirm that the power of the church is not derived from the state, or dependent upon it, we do not plead for the exemption either of the members, or of the rulers, from civil authority. The Church of Rome, indeed, contended for this privilege in behalf of the clergy, and succeeded in establishing it. They were not amenable to the magistrate, even when they had committed crimes, and were accountable only to the ecclesiastical tribunals. Protestants advance no such claim; and acknowledge that church-men, as well as lay-men, are subject to the civil jurisdiction. The objection, therefore, which has been raised against the intrinsic power of the church,—that it establishes *imperium in imperio*,—is not applicable to our principles; although it bears with all its force against those of papists, by which the clergy, in all the nations of Europe, were incorporated into a body, independent of the states which protected them, and owing obedience solely to bishops and archbishops, and the pope at their head. Thus two rival powers were erected, with opposite interests; and we learn from history what fatal conflicts sometimes ensued, involving nations in destructive wars, and terminating in the degradation and dethronement of monarchs. The church, indeed, even upon our principles, may be called *imperium in imperio*; because it is a society subsisting in the bosom of a state, distinct from it with respect to its internal jurisdiction, and governed by its own laws; but it threatens no danger to the state, and gives it no disturbance in carrying on its proper functions, because it does not intermeddle with civil and political affairs, and confines itself to claims and operations purely spiritual.

The power of the church is commonly divided according to the nature of the objects about which it is employed, into three parts. The first is called *potestas dogmatix*, or its power respecting articles of faith; and under this head some comprehend the preaching of the word, the administration of the sacraments, the ordination of ministers, &c. The second is *potestas diataxix*, or the power of the church to make laws and constitutions. The third is *potestas diaxix*, or the power of the church to censure and excommunicate offenders, and to restore the penitent to communion.

The first in order is the *potestas dogmatix*, or the power of the church in reference to dogmas or articles of faith. That the church has power to make such articles, Protestants deny, upon this ground, that the Scriptures contain all the truths which it is necessary to know and believe; and they justly condemn the Church of Rome, which, admitting another rule of faith called tradition, has introduced into her creed human dogmas and grossly erroneous tenets, and anathematised all who do not implicitly receive them. In order to determine how far this part of the power of the church extends, I shall lay before you the following observations.

First, The church is the depository of the Scriptures. Under the former dispensation, the sacred oracles were committed to the Jews; but the honour of being their guardians is now transferred to the disciples of Christ. The church having received them as containing the whole revelation of the will of God, she is bound to keep them as a precious treasure, and to transmit them from

age to age, in order to enlighten, and sanctify, and comfort the souls of men, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."\* But although the Scriptures are deposited in the hands of the church, we must beware of thinking that their authority depends in any degree upon her judgment, or that her sanction was necessary to give them validity. This doctrine is maintained in the church of Rome. The Scriptures, it has been said, have no authority without the authority of the church; and without the church, Matthew is entitled to no more credit than Livy. But, besides the impiety of such sentiments, papists involve themselves in palpable absurdity. If you ask them how we shall know the church, whose authority is so great, they must answer that we know it from the Scriptures, and thus they reason in a circle, proving first the authority of the church from the Scriptures, and then the authority of the Scriptures from the church. We acknowledge that it is by testimony that we ascertain the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures. By the testimony of those who lived at the time when they were published, and were deeply interested in the matter, we are assured that they are the writings of the persons to whom they are ascribed. Thus far their testimony goes, but no farther. We do not receive the Scriptures simply because they received them; but because we are sure, from their circumstances, that they would not have received them, unless they had been fully satisfied of the Divine commission of those who gave them to the world. If the church has any thing to do in this business, its office is merely to point out the books in which revelation is contained. Our belief of their divinity is founded on the internal and external evidences of their heavenly origin. We do not ascribe a power to the church to admit books into the canon, or to exclude them from it, at her pleasure. In admitting and excluding, she was bound to proceed upon evidence; and we acquiesce in her decision, not because it is hers, but because the evidence upon which it was founded appears satisfactory to ourselves. But this is very different from the Romish doctrine, which resolves all the evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and all their authority, into the decrees of the church.

Secondly, It belongs to the church to explain the Scriptures, and to call upon men to study, and believe, and obey them. The ministers of the church are the expounders of the law; and to them may be applied the words of the prophet, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts."† But the expositions of the church are authoritative only in a limited sense. Her ministers are not self-created teachers, but have received their commission from Jesus Christ, and in executing it are bound to take his word as their rule; but as they may misapprehend its meaning, or intentionally deviate from it, and obtrude their own notions as the dictates of revelation, it is a duty which Christians owe to themselves and to their Divine Master, to exalt no human being to the chair of infallibility, to take nothing upon trust, and to bring the doctrine of their teachers "to the law and to the testimony, because, if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them."‡ The church, we have said, has no power to make new articles of faith, and ought therefore to adhere strictly to the Scriptures in all her instructions. By the Romanists another standard has been introduced, to which they assign an equal degree of authority with the Scriptures, or rather a greater, as they do not hesitate to affirm that without its aid the Scriptures cannot be understood. This is tradition; by which they mean a summary of doctrine which was in the church before the Scriptures were published, and is the only sure interpreter of them, has come down by oral communication or in the writings of the Fathers, and

\* Eph. iv. 13.

† Mal. ii. 7.

‡ Isa. viii. 20.



would suffice for the direction of Christians in all things necessary to be believed and practised, although the Scriptures were annihilated. It is unnecessary to say how derogatory all this is to the honour of the Scriptures, and how contrary to their own testimony concerning themselves, that they are "a light to our feet and a lamp to our path;"\* and that they "are able to make us wise unto salvation," and to "furnish us for every good work."† This witness is not true, if tradition is necessary. What the church of Rome says concerning tradition is a mere assumption without the shadow of proof, and rests upon the same ground with the oral law of the Jews. It is equally uncertain, no man being able to tell what it is; it changes with the fancies of men, that which is a truth of tradition in one age, being pronounced to be an error in another; it is any thing which they choose to make it, to serve their own purposes. It is the inexhaustible storehouse from which papists have drawn the enormous mass of error, superstition, and idolatry, which has made the word of God of no effect, and almost overwhelmed the Christian religion.

Lastly, The church has power to draw up and enact summaries of Christian doctrine, in order to exhibit to the world her views of the Scriptures, to oppose prevailing heresies and errors, to furnish the people with a concise statement of the great principles of religion, and to provide an effectual means of ascertaining the sentiments of candidates for admission, especially into the ministry, and thus to secure harmony and uniformity in the public ministrations. These are called symbols, confessions, articles, formularies, and they were introduced at an early period. We have the Nicene creed, the Constantinopolitan creed, and others composed by synods and councils. There is also the celebrated Athanasian creed, which is called by the name of Athanasius, because it contains a summary of his doctrine. The real author is unknown, but its orthodoxy has procured its reception by several churches. Besides these, there is the Apostles' creed, which also owes its name to the conformity of its doctrines to that of the Apostles. It is certain that it was not drawn up by them; and a story which has been told, that at its original formation all the Apostles were present and each contributed a part, is absurd and ridiculous. Modern churches have imitated the example of those in former times, and have given to the public their confessions of faith, from which we learn how far they agree with the Scriptures, and in what respects they differ from each other.

If you ask what authority these summaries possess, I answer, that they have none in themselves, any more than other human compositions. The only difference between them and the creeds of individuals is this, that there is a greater probability that they are right; as it is less likely that so many who were engaged in drawing them up should have erred, than a single person, who gives the result of his insulated studies. At the same time, I must say that this probability does not amount to much, because we sometimes find that there is an Athanasius *contra totum mundum*, or that one man discovers the truth, and a council misses it; and, at any rate, it is not a ground on which any Christian could safely and rationally proceed in choosing his creed. The authority of such summaries is derived solely from the Scriptures; if they are agreeable to them, they are binding, because they exhibit the truth if not agreeable to them, they ought to be rejected, with as little ceremony as we should use towards a private attempt to impose upon conscience. There has been much misapprehension upon this subject, which has been too much encouraged by the vague, injudicious language of the public teachers of religion; and the standards of a church have been regarded as sacred things, which it would be profaneness to touch. So far as these sentiments prevail among Protestants, they adopt one of the most absurd and dangerous errors of Po-

\* Ps. cxix. 105.

† 2 Tim. iii. 15. 17.

pery. When the church speaks, we have a right to try what she says by the supreme standard; and her dictates have no control over our consciences, unless she can satisfactorily show that they are conformable to it.

The sum, then, of what has been said concerning the *potestas dogmatica* of the church is, that she is the depository of the Scriptures; that she is appointed to interpret them, and performs this duty by public and private instruction, oral and written, but has no power to make articles of faith; and that, as she is not infallible, every man retains the right of private judgment, or the right to examine the Scriptures for himself, and to follow them, either by joining in the profession of the church, or by dissenting from it. This view of the power of the church accords with the sentiments stated in our Confession of Faith: "It belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience;" and their "decrees and determinations, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission." "All synods and councils since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as an help in both."\* The church of England expresses the same sentiments in the article concerning general councils: "When they be gathered together, (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and word of God,) they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them, as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture."†

Let us now proceed to consider the second part of the power of the church, which is called *potestas διατακτική*, or *potestas ordinans*; that is, the power to enact canons, or rules for government and order.

In the first place, The church has not power to establish any form of government which shall appear most eligible to her rulers, judging in this matter as if they were at liberty to pursue their own views of propriety and expedience. Were the form of government ambulatory, as some suppose, it would undoubtedly belong to them to accommodate it to circumstances, so far as this might be done without injury to the interests of religion. But we have proved that a particular form is prescribed, from which they cannot deviate, without usurping an authority which cannot be derived from Jesus Christ, as it is employed in setting aside his institutions. The command to Moses is addressed also to them: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shown unto thee in the mount."‡ It may be objected, that the form of government for the Christian church is not delineated with as much particularity as the tabernacle was, with its various services. But the general principles are laid down; the outlines are given; and the church has nothing to do but to develope the principles, and to fill up the outlines, in exact conformity to the spirit of the original sketch.

In the second place, The church has not power to make laws to regulate the moral conduct of the members; she has no legislative authority; and her office consists solely in publishing and enjoining the laws which the Head of the church has already enacted. Moral laws can emanate only from the Sovereign of heaven and earth. Ecclesiastical rulers are in the same situation with the subordinate magistrates in a kingdom. There are laws which bind them as well as the subjects; and the only purpose for which they are appointed, is to superintend the execution of them. The decalogue which was published from Sinai, is the standard of duty to Christians as well as to Jews; and of its perfection no doubt can be entertained, whether we reflect upon its Author, or upon the two grand principles upon which it is founded, and into which all its precepts

\* Chap. xxxi. § 3, 4.

† Art. xxi.

‡ Heb. viii. 5.



are resolved,—supreme love to God, and sincere love to our neighbour. The details of duty in the Scripture, whether in the didactic, the exhortatory, or the admonitory form, serve to explain it; and the text, with the commentary, constitutes a rule so full and so particular, that it stands in need of no addition, and is sufficient to direct the Christian in the whole course of his life. The Church of Rome is guilty of great presumption and impiety in assuming the right of legislation. Not content to enforce the commandments of Christ, she has enlarged his law by new precepts, originating in her own authority, or, what is the same thing, in tradition,—the name which she uses to justify her corruptions and usurpations; she has instituted holidays which God has not appointed; prescribed modes and objects of worship which are condemned in his word; prohibited certain kinds of food at some times to all, and at all times to some; forbidden the marriage of the clergy; enjoined confession to a priest, fasts, penances, and pilgrimages; and has introduced these innovations, not as matters of order and expedience; but as laws binding upon conscience, and requiring obedience under pain of censure and mortal sin. Thus the prediction has been fulfilled, that “the man of sin should, as God, sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”\* And every church which dares to make laws which shall directly affect conscience, blasphemously arrogates the prerogative of the Most High. “God alone,” says our Confession, “is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience.”†

In the third place, The church has not power to decree rites and ceremonies. Here we encounter the Church of Rome, and the Church of England; which last affirms in her articles that the church has such power;‡ and to both, the claim is necessary to justify their practice. We demand Scriptural proof, but can find none. It is in vain to quote the words of Paul to the Corinthians, “Let all things be done decently and in order;”§ because they do not refer to rites and ceremonies, but to certain abuses in the public exercise of extraordinary gifts. They have not the most remote relation to a supposed power to render the ordinances and ministrations of religion more becoming and impressive by human additions to them. There is a vague kind of talk among persons who seem to know little of the nature of genuine religion, about the necessity of adapting it to the nature of man, who is so much influenced by his senses as to be incapable of pure spiritual contemplations, and needs their aid to fix his attention, and excite devout sentiments and affections. But while we deny that there is any such necessity, and can prove the falsity of the assumption by experience, we say that, if it had existed, we may presume that the Author of religion, who knows our frame, would have provided for it by appointing suitable rites, and not have left the invention of them to men themselves, who have discovered such a propensity in all ages to corrupt religion, and to turn it into a vain show. It is supposed that the ordinances of the gospel are defective from their simplicity, and that, unless they be new-modelled, they will not produce the intended effect, at least upon the generality of mankind. Is not this plainly to impeach the wisdom of Christ, as if he had not rightly apprehended the proper means of making religious impressions upon the human mind, or had delivered his institutions to the church in an unfinished state, and committed the supply of what was wanting to persons who have proved themselves incompetent, by the nature of the ceremonies which they have devised, and by the multiplication of them to such a degree as to convert religion into a bodily service? The advocates for ceremonies forget the words of our Lord, “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him

\* 2 Thess. ii. 4.

† Chap. xx. 2.

‡ Art. xx.

§ 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

in spirit and in truth;”\* and would turn religion into a mechanical process, the effect of impressions on the senses and the imagination. They forget that it is spiritual; that it is produced by the contemplation of spiritual objects; that the medium by which these affect the mind is faith, which “is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for;”† and that the excitement of the natural passions has nothing of the nature of piety, in the estimation of Him who dwells with the humble and the contrite that tremble at his word.

The church assumes a power which does not belong to her, when she makes any addition to the institutions of Christ; and still more when she exacts the observance of these on pain of censure and excommunication. In this case, she claims an authority co-ordinate with that of our exalted Redeemer. Were the church simply to recommend certain ceremonies, leaving it free to every man to observe them or not, according to the dictates of his conscience, her conduct, although it could not be justified, would be less reprehensible. But when she issues her mandate, that all should conform, she assumes the tone of an usurper and a tyrant; and it is a duty which every man owes to the Head of the church, to resist her impositions. Besides other instances of will-worship in the Church of England, she has appended two human rites to the sacraments,—the sign of the cross in baptism, and kneeling at the Lord’s Supper. For the first, there is not a shadow of authority in the practice of the Apostles; and the reason which she gives for it is imaginary;—that “it is a token that the baptized person shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banners against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s end.” Men are the authors both of the sign and of the interpretation of it. Faith, which rests solely upon revelation, sees nothing in it but an idle motion of the hand. Kneeling at the Lord’s table is enjoined as expressive of reverence; but by what authority is this posture required? Not surely by that of Jesus Christ, who administered the ordinance to his disciples placed at table in the same manner as when they received their ordinary meals. How then comes it to pass that the symbols of his body and blood must be received with a sign of external reverence, which was not given when he himself was corporeally present? This is rather a puzzling question even to Papists, who believe transubstantiation; and still more so to Protestants, who do not believe it; but the truth is, that the rite is derived from Papists, who maintain that the elements are changed into the body, blood, and divinity of Christ; and is therefore, among Protestants, a childish and absurd imitation of a practice founded on a doctrine which they hold in abhorrence. There is not much encouragement to recognize in the church this power of ordaining ceremonies, when we see that one of its fruits is symbolizing with idolaters. The ordinances were given by Jesus Christ in a perfect state, and are as sufficient to promote all the ends of their institution now, as they were in the primitive times, when they subsisted in their original simplicity.

Lastly, There are several matters respecting external order, to which the power of the church does extend. These do not relate to the essence or form of the ordinances of religion, or to the moral conduct of the members; but to circumstances which are connected with the regular proceedings of any society, and which human prudence is competent to settle. Thus, it belongs to the church to appoint the times of public worship; not to make holidays, but to determine at what hours Christians shall assemble on the Sabbath, and on what other occasions they shall come together to join in the solemn exercises of religion, according to the calls of Providence. It is also her province, to point out the order in which the public ministrations should be conducted, that

\* John iv. 24.

† Heb. xi. 1.



uniformity may be established within her pale; to fix the bounds of congregations, presbyteries, and synods, that there may be no interference of interests and claims, and that each may confine itself to its own jurisdiction; to make regulations respecting their intercourse, and the transference of members from one place to another; to lay down rules for conducting judicial processes, that nothing may be done rashly or unfairly, but the ends of justice may be attained; to prescribe the education of candidates for the ministry, and the steps which are to be taken with a view to ascertain their qualifications, and to introduce them into office. With regard to such matters, it is evident that they imply no legislative authority, but merely the power of arrangement; that uniformity is not necessary throughout the whole Christian church, but only in particular divisions of it; and that the order may be varied, without impeding the general purpose of edification, according to the judgment of the church, founded upon the customs and circumstances of different nations and times.

Let us proceed to consider the last part of ecclesiastical power, which is called *potestas disciplinaria*, or *potestas judicialis vel disciplinaria*, and consists in the exercise of discipline. Erastus and his followers, who denied the power of the church *in toto*, necessarily controverted the power of discipline, and maintained, that she had no right to exclude any from her communion; and that, in doing so, she encroached upon the prerogative of the civil magistrate, to whom alone it belongs to punish the guilty.

The abettors of this opinion place the church in more disadvantageous circumstances than any other society. A state has power to protect itself from disorder and dishonour, by the restraint and expulsion of the lawless and unruly. Every other association lays down rules to be observed by the members, the infraction of which subjects them to censure, and it may be, to the loss of their privileges. It would be strange to suppose that the church alone is exposed, without defence, to have her peace disturbed, her laws violated, her reputation injured, by conduct inconsistent with her holy profession. To say that the civil magistrate ought to interpose to remedy such disorders, is to annihilate the church, or to make it exist only in name. In this case, the church and the state are the same; the privileges of the church belong to men as members of the state; and the state punishes them, not as unworthy disciples of Christ, but as disobedient subjects.

To every person who has read and understood the Scriptures, it will appear that the church is a society specifically different from the state, and instituted solely for spiritual purposes. A person has a right of admission into it, not because he was born in the country where it is established, nor simply because he was baptized in his infancy, but because he makes a credible profession of faith. On this ground only can he claim the enjoyment of its privileges, which from their nature appear not to be intended for all promiscuously, but for those who in the judgment of charity are disciples of Christ. It is evident, that it is only on the same ground that he can retain them; and that, if he has forfeited his title by conduct which impeaches the sincerity of his profession, they may be justly suspended or withdrawn. If this be granted to be true,—and it is not conceivable that it can be disputed by any man of common sense,—the inference is obvious, that there must be a power lodged in the church to enforce the observance of her laws by censures and excommunication.

When our Lord gave Peter “the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” we do not conceive that he conferred upon him a peculiar privilege, unless the words refer simply to the fact, that he was the person who opened the new dispensation to the Jews, by preaching to them on the day of Pentecost, and to the Gentiles by preaching to Cornelius. Whatever power is implied in these words, “Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, shall be bound in heaven, and

whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,"\* was common to him and the other Apostles, to whom the same words were addressed on another occasion.† Binding and loosing are expressive of authority, not only to declare doctrinally what are the obligations of Christians, and in what respects they are free, but to inflict and remove censures. The offender is bound when the church pronounces sentence upon him, and is loosed when he is restored to privileges upon repentance; and the proceedings are ratified in heaven, when they are conducted in conformity to Scripture.

It appears that discipline was exercised in the primitive church. The case of the incestuous man is an example. He had committed a sin aggravated in itself, and highly discreditable to the Christian profession; and Paul commanded the Corinthians, "when they were gathered together, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver him unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord."‡ He told them at the same time, that although they could not avoid all intercourse with the wicked men of the world; yet, "if any man that was called a brother was a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner," they were not to keep company, nor even to eat with him;§ and as we might have expected, he plainly signified that they were not to sit down with him at the table of the Lord. He directs a heretic to be rejected after the first and second admonition;|| and he calls upon Christians to withdraw from every brother that walked disorderly, and not after the tradition which they had received.¶ Some of the Asiatic churches are reprov'd, because they had neglected the exercise of discipline. The charge brought against them is, that "they had them that held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans," and "that held the doctrine of Balaam;" "that they suffered that woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess;"\*\* and the obvious meaning is, that, instead of employing the authority which they had received from Jesus Christ against such persons, they permitted them to remain in the church.

The rulers of the church have authority over the members. As it is their province to judge who should be admitted, and to inspect their conduct when they have been received into fellowship, so they have power to censure and to expel such as prove themselves to be unworthy. This is the natural right of every society, and it is given to the church by the special appointment of her Sovereign: "Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." "Exhort and rebuke with all authority; let no man despise thee."††

The objects of the censures of the church are offences or scandals; by which are meant, parts of conduct which are contrary to the law of Christ, and are calculated to lead others into sin by the force of example, as well as to expose religion to reproach. They are public offences known to the church, or to some part of the members; for, with respect to those of a private nature, they ought not to be brought to light, unless the guilty person persist in them after private admonition; and to tell them in the first instance to the church, is to create a scandal, under the pretext of removing it.

Offences are to be treated differently, according to the difference of their degrees. When they are of a lighter kind, and discover rather inadvertence than bad intention, a simple admonition will suffice: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."‡‡ A greater degree of guilt will call for a more severe expression of disapprobation, or a rebuke solemnly administered in the name of Jesus Christ, of which it is the design to affect more deeply the conscience of the offender, and to excite him to

\* Matth. xvi. 19.

§ 1 Cor. v. 11.

\*\* Rev. ii. 14, 15. 20.

† Ib. xviii. 18.

|| Titus iii. 10.

†† 2 Tim. iv. 2. Tit. ii. 15.

‡ 1 Cor. v. 4, 5.

¶ 2 Thess. iii. 6.

## Gal. vi. 1.



prayer for pardon and sanctifying grace. There are cases which require that the church should proceed still farther. Individuals sometimes commit flagrant and aggravated sins, which, although they do not necessarily infer the total want of religious principle, bring the sincerity of their profession into doubt. Such offenders are suspended from sealing ordinances, as they are called, till they have given evidence of repentance, and then they are restored to their privileges. This sentence is called the lesser excommunication, and the removal of it is termed absolution. They are not absolved from their sin,—for it is the prerogative of God alone to forgive it,—but from the sentence of excommunication. The highest censure which the church has power to inflict, is called the greater excommunication, and consists in expelling the person from the communion of the faithful. The grounds of it are contumacy or the obstinate refusal to submit to admonition and rebuke, and perseverance in sin in defiance of all endeavours to reclaim him. We have an example in the case of the incestuous man, who was delivered “unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord.”\* Commentators generally suppose that these words imply something miraculous, and that the man was smitten with some bodily disease, through the agency of Satan, in consequence of which his health and strength declined. His spirit would be saved in the day of the Lord, if, through the Divine blessing, his experience of the painful effects of sin in this life, proved the means of leading him to repentance. But even in the present times, this highest censure may be still considered as the delivering of the excommunicated person to Satan. The world is the kingdom of Satan, and the church is the kingdom of Christ. Excommunication is the returning of a professed subject of Christ, who has proved himself to be a traitor and a rebel, to the kingdom to which he originally belonged. It declares that Christ is not his Lord, for he has refused to obey him, and that he is under the dominion of the prince of this world. He is sent back to him as an alien, who has no right to remain in the kingdom of Christ; because he has violated its laws, and is determined not to submit to them. Hence it appears that this sentence is very awful; since, when pronounced upon just grounds, it involves the eternal perdition of the person, if he continue impenitent.

But the effects of the censures of the church extend only to the soul. It is a gross perversion of their design, to accompany them with civil pains, confiscation of goods, imprisonment, exile, or death; to deliver up the excommunicated person to the secular arm, as the Church of Rome does, with a hypocritical prayer that he may be mercifully treated, while it is her secret intention that he should expire at a stake. “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual.” Power is given to the church, not for destruction, but for edification; and its object is the good even of those who fall under the severest censures. Like him whom she acknowledges as her Head, she has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked should turn from their ways and live; and her arms are opened to receive the penitent, and to restore them to a place among her children.

\* 1 Cor. v. 5.

## LECTURE CII.

## ON THE LAW OF GOD.

Connexion of the Practical and Doctrinal Parts of Theology.—The Moral Law.—Remarks on the Ground of Moral Obligation; and the Source of Morality.—The Decalogue.—Rules for Interpreting It.

THE system of Theology consists of two parts, the doctrinal and the practical. The former is the foundation of the latter. The natural order of things, therefore, requires that we should first consider the doctrines and then proceed to explain the duties which spring out of them. It is because God is our Creator, that he has a right to give law to us; and the relation in which he stands to us as creatures and as sinners, the dispensations of which we are the objects, and the privileges and blessings which he has bestowed upon us, supply the motives by which we should be excited to obey. In a course of ministerial instructions, these two parts are usually blended together. It may sometimes, indeed, be deemed expedient to go over the system in regular order, and, in this case, a separate illustration will be given of doctrines and precepts; but even then they ought not to be kept entirely distinct. No doctrine of religion should be expounded, without some statement of the duties to which it leads, and the motives which it furnishes; for all our discourses should be of a practical tendency. On the other hand, no duty should be inculcated, without a reference more or less explicit, to the doctrine or doctrines with which it is connected, and by the belief of which the heart is purified, and its powers are engaged in the service of God. The gospel is represented to be the doctrine according to godliness, or, the doctrine which inspires piety towards God, and respect for his authority.

In the Scriptures, doctrines and precepts are often mixed; but sometimes they are exhibited separately. In the Old Testament, besides the precepts of the law of Moses which are delivered at great length in the Pentateuch, we have the Book of Proverbs, which is almost wholly composed of moral maxims and rules of life. In the New Testament, we have our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, besides parables and discourses of the same nature in the Gospels; and of the Epistles, those of which the first part is devoted to doctrinal discussions, commonly conclude with a detail of duties which believers are bound to maintain. Some of the Epistles are the models upon which our systems are formed; and the similarity of arrangement is particularly observable in the Epistle to the Romans.

The law of God, which is binding upon Christians, is contained in the Decalogue, or the Ten Words, as the Jews call it, because it consists of ten precepts, which were originally written on two tablets of stone; the first, comprehending the four precepts which enjoin our duty to God; and the second, the six which prescribe our duty to men. It is called the Moral Law, because the subject of its injunctions is not ceremonial observances, but moral actions; and to distinguish it from the positive laws, which were only of temporary obligation. Of this description was the ceremonial law, which prescribed the ritual of worship under the former economy, and the judicial law, which regulated the civil and political affairs of the Jews. The ceremonial law was abrogated when its typical institutions were fulfilled in Jesus Christ; and the judicial law was repealed when the Jews ceased to exist in a national capacity. The moral law, however, has no relation to times and places, or to one nation



more than another; but being founded in the relations of men to their Creator, and to one another, it retains its authority under all dispensations.

It is commonly said that this law was originally written upon the heart of man; but the language is figurative, and, unless it be explained, conveys no idea to the mind. We understand by it, then, not only that man was endowed with intellectual and moral powers, or was created with a capacity to perceive his duty and feel its obligation, but that the knowledge of it was immediately communicated to him by his Maker. He was not left to find it out by reflection and reasoning, but was at once made acquainted with his relations, and the moral obligations resulting from them. In consequence of sin, this light became dim, so that the full extent of the region which it once illuminated was no longer perceived, and the objects which still fell within the sphere of vision, were not seen in their exact shape and dimensions. Accordingly, the moral code of heathen nations is imperfect, leaving out some duties, and exhibiting others in a mutilated form; but the notion of a moral law has been widely diffused, and some traces of it may be discovered among all nations. The Gentiles who have not the written law, do by nature the things enjoined by it, and show that the work of the law is written upon their hearts, by the operations of conscience, which sometimes accuses, and at other times excuses them.\* The morality of heathens may be accounted for in two ways. It may be conceived to have been handed down to them by tradition, to be the voice of the law, which was given to our first parents, and revived by subsequent revelations, still speaking to men by the lips of their progenitors and teachers, who have inculcated from age to age the precepts which had been delivered to themselves by a preceding race. It may be supposed, again, to be the result of reasoning; a discovery made by the mental faculties employed in contemplating the principles, feelings, and instincts of human nature, and the circumstances in which it is placed, and in deducing inferences from them. This, however, is the work only of a few superior minds, and will not account for the existence of moral sentiments among all classes of men. I am disposed to think that heathen nations are chiefly indebted for their knowledge to tradition, although it cannot be questioned that the human mind is so constituted as to perceive the propriety or impropriety of certain actions, and to make them the objects of approbation or disapprobation.

How insufficient reason is to discover a system of morality, we could not determine with precision, unless we had an opportunity to observe its success in a nation which was left solely to the light of nature. But where shall we meet with such a nation, since all mankind are derived from the same stock, and the original family was illuminated by revelation? Few of its rays may now shine in some regions of the earth; but we are not certain that they are any-where completely extinguished; that is, we cannot ascertain that any nation owes all its knowledge on this subject to its own insulated discoveries. But the general insufficiency of reason is evident, not only from the errors and defects in the codes of morality which have been drawn up with the aid of tradition by the most learned and civilized heathens, but from the difficulty which professed Christians have experienced in settling the foundation of their system, when they had resolved to be guided in the inquiry by reason alone.

The first question which demands our attention, is the ground of moral obligation; and here we encounter many different opinions. If I ask why I should pursue one course of action rather than the opposite; one says, Because it is right; another, Because it is conformable to reason and nature; a third, Because it is conformable to truth; a fourth, Because it is agreeable to the fitness of things; and a fifth, Because it contributes to the general good. The fitness of things has been much insisted upon by some metaphysical writers

\* Rom. ii. 14.

as the ground of moral obligation. "The necessary and eternal different relations that different things bear to one another, and the consequent fitness or unfitness of the application of different things or different relations to one another, ought constantly to determine the wills of all rational beings, to govern all their actions by the rules of justice, equity, goodness, and truth, for the good of the public, in their respective stations; that is, these eternal and necessary differences of things make it fit and reasonable so to act; they cause it to be their duty, or lay an obligation upon them so to do, even separate from the consideration of these rules being the positive will or command of God." It is pretty plain that this abstruse speculation, which some of you may find it difficult to comprehend, could never be intended to be the ground of moral obligation to mankind at large; and that we must seek for it in something more simple and level to their capacity. It is equally evident, that it properly constitutes no moral obligation at all. The fitness of things is said, indeed, to oblige us independently of the will of God; but how can this be? Is there any obligation but from a law; and any law without the will of a superior? If a man act contrary to the fitness of things, you may pronounce him to be unreasonable, but you cannot call him criminal. He may subject himself to inconvenience or suffering; but he is only foolish. The truth is, that the fitness of things as a rule of duty is a word without meaning; and is only used in an intelligible sense, when it expresses the institution of things by the will of the Creator, from which the duties of his creatures naturally flow. But when thus explained, the fitness of things and the will of God signify the same thing; the fitness, the relation, or the order of things, being the medium by which he has intimated his will.—Another ground of obligation is utility, or the tendency of actions, to promote the general good. "Actions are to be estimated," says Dr. Paley, "by their tendency. Whatever is expedient is right. It is the utility of any moral rule alone which constitutes the obligation of it."\* But hear Bishop Butler. "As we are not competent judges what is upon the whole for the good of the world, there may be other immediate ends appointed us to pursue, besides that one of doing good or producing happiness. Though the good of the creation be the only end of the Author of it, yet he may have laid us under particular obligations, which we may discern and feel ourselves under, quite distinct from a perception, that the observance or violation of them is for the happiness or misery of our fellow-creatures. And this is in fact the case. For there are certain dispositions of mind, and certain actions, which are in themselves approved or disapproved by mankind, abstracted from the consideration of their tendency to the happiness or misery of the world; approved or disapproved by reflection, by that principle which is the guide of life, the judge of right and wrong."† I may add, that to hold utility to be the foundation of morals, is to ascribe to men more comprehensive views than they actually possess; and it is well said in the above quotation, that we are not competent judges what is upon the whole for the good of the world. It is a principle too unwieldy for our grasp, and extremely apt to be abused by the substitution of particular for general good. Besides, all our knowledge of what is good is derived from experience, and is posterior to moral obligation, unless we suppose that the laws founded upon it did not become binding, till men had discovered them in the progress of time. I apprehend that, in this theory, the effects of a law are confounded with the reason of it; and this is an error; for it by no means follows, because moral laws are productive of happiness, that they had no other cause, and were intended to accomplish no other design. They may result from the nature of things, or the relations which subsist in the universe; and the good

\* Moral Philosophy, book i. chap. 6.

† Sermon on the Love of our Neighbour—*Note*



resulting from them, may not be their ultimate end, but a consequence of the benevolence which gave existence to the system of creation.

The details of morality will evidently be affected by the principle which is assumed as its foundation, or by the rule of action which is established. It is not certain that the same conclusions would be drawn by the person who founded it in the fitness of things, and by him who founded it on utility. Hence we see the insufficiency of reason to be the guide of life, and should be thankful that we enjoy a clearer and more steady light.

A question has been agitated among Theologians with respect to the rule of moral action, whether it originated in the will of God, or is founded in the nature of things; and this is in fact to inquire whether morality is mutable or immutable. Some have maintained that the whole moral law originated in the will of God; that the duties enjoined in it are right, solely because he has commanded them; and that, if he had so pleased, our duty might have been made to consist in actions different, or contrary. A similar notion was entertained by some ancient philosophers, who pronounced virtue and vice to be arbitrary distinctions; and is imputed by the Fathers to Simon Magus, as one of the erroneous tenets which he inculcated. It has been adopted by some Divines of the Roman Church, with a design to uphold the dispensing power which they ascribe to the Pope. It would be sufficient, I should think, to silence them, were we simply to ask, whether God could have exempted us from the duty of loving himself, or have made it our duty to hate him; and whether the same change might have taken place with respect to the love of our neighbour? Others run into the opposite extreme, and affirm, that the whole moral law is founded in the nature of things; and consequently that no part of it could be altered. It is exactly what it must always be, while God and man continue the same. Some of them, however, have found it necessary to qualify this opinion, and have given such an explanation of it as virtually amounts to the third opinion, which I am going to state, and which holds an intermediate place between the two former; namely, that although the moral law in general is founded on the nature of things, or on the relations of man to his Maker and to his fellow-creatures, yet some particulars are the subject of positive institution. I refer, as an example, to the fourth commandment, which is acknowledged to be partly moral, and partly positive; moral, as it requires the consecration of a part of our time to the immediate service of God; positive, as it appropriates a seventh part of it. God might have demanded a greater or a less portion, a fifth, or a tenth; or, instead of setting apart a whole day, he might have been satisfied with a part of each day. There was a reason for the selection of the seventh rather than of any other day, namely, because upon it God rested from the work of creation; but it has given place, as we Christians believe, to a new and stronger reason, and the Sabbath is changed from the seventh day to the first. I refer, as another example, to the law respecting marriage, by which the relation is forbidden to persons standing in certain degrees of consanguinity and affinity. According to the latitude in which the precepts of the Decalogue are to be interpreted, the prohibition is included in the seventh commandment. Whatever reason may be assigned for the prohibition, we cannot consider it as of the same immutable obligation with the precept, not to steal, or not to lie. It may be dispensed with, not by human authority, but by that of the Supreme Lawgiver; and accordingly, marriages within the forbidden degrees have been contracted with his express approbation. In the beginning of the world, the sons of Adam married their sisters; and, by the Mosaic law, if a man died without issue, his brother was required to marry his widow. Such marriages are now held to be incestuous. We may therefore say, that there is a mixture of moral and positive in the Decalogue; and there is truth in the old observation, that some things are commanded because they are just,

and some are just because they are commanded. Those which are just because they are commanded, may be altered by the same will which enacted them; but those which are commanded because they are just, are of perpetual obligation. We have no example of the suspension or abrogation of a moral precept, unless we should view, as an instance of suspension, the permission to work on the Sabbath in cases of necessity and mercy; which, however, is not a deviation from the original design of the Law, because the Sabbath was made for man, that is, for his good, not man for the Sabbath. But we cannot regard in this light, the command to the Israelites to destroy the seven nations of Canaan. This was not a violation of the sixth precept; which, indeed, forbids one man to embrace his hands in the blood of another, but reserves to God the right to dispose of his creatures; and, in taking away their life, he may employ some of themselves, as the civil magistrate does not himself execute the law, but delegates another. Neither can we regard in this light, the command to the Israelites to borrow from the Egyptians. It seems to imply an authorized breach of morality; for borrowing involves a promise to restore, which the Israelites had certainly no intention to perform. But they received no such command. Our translation is unhappy; the original word signifies simply *to ask*. God directed the Israelites to ask jewels of gold and silver, and at the same time he disposed the Egyptians to grant their request. Thus he spoiled the oppressors of his people, and recompensed the latter for the hard service which they had so long performed: "The Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of all the people."\*

On whatever ground the precepts of the moral law are supposed to rest, the reason that we are bound to obey them is the will of God. This makes them law to us, and not our perception of fitness or utility. That only is a law which proceeds from the will of a superior; obedience and authority are correlates, the one supposes the other. To us who enjoy revelation, questions concerning the abstract foundation of morality are unnecessary; and the best thing which can be said of them is, that they are idle speculations, because our morality will not constitute a part of religion, unless it proceed from love to God, or, in other words, from respect to his will. The man who believes that his duty is enjoined by the authority of God, possesses all the requisite knowledge for practical purposes, and, I may add, the true knowledge of the subject; for when we attempt to derive our obligations from any other source, we turn morality into a matter of calculation. The question with us is, not what is conformable to the nature of things, for in many cases this is a point about which we are incompetent to judge; or what is conducive to the general good, for here our views are too limited to decide; but what is agreeable to the will of our Maker; and this is easily ascertained by referring to his own authoritative declarations. Thus the knowledge of morality is brought within the reach of all who can read the word of God, or hear it read; and it is owing to this simple method of teaching it, that the illiterate in Christian countries have more comprehensive and accurate ideas than the most enlightened moralists of the heathen world.

Our Lord delivered a summary of duty on the following occasion, which is thus related by Matthew: "Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law

\* Exod. xi. 3.



and the prophets.”\* Love to our Maker and to our fellow-men is the principle of obedience. Our various duties are merely the development of it. It is the root, and they are the branches growing out of it, or the fruits which it yields. “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets;” that is, the precepts delivered in the pentateuch, and in the prophetic writings, are the different modes in which love to God and to man is expressed, and they will be obeyed by every man in whom this love exists. “If there be any other commandment,” says an Apostle, when speaking of the precepts of the second table, “it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.’”†

But love is only the principle of obedience, the state of mind which leads to it; the mode in which it should be manifested, is the subject of positive prescription. The Decalogue is founded upon it, and points out the various ways in which we should express our love to God and to men; it was written upon two tables, the one containing the duties of which God is the immediate object, and the other the duties which we owe to our fellow-men. Yet these tables must be considered as exhibiting only a summary of duty. They do not enter into detail, but are general heads, from which particulars are to be deduced by ourselves, or are to be collected from the commentaries upon them, which are scattered up and down in the Scriptures. Certain rules have been laid down for the right interpretation of the law.

First, It should always be remembered that “the law is spiritual,” as it is called by an Apostle;‡ and, consequently, that it requires something more than external conformity to its precepts. Most of the precepts, when literally understood, relate only to the outward conduct; as, “Thou shalt not kill;” “Thou shalt not steal,” &c.; but the last, which says, “Thou shalt not covet,” regulates the movements of the heart; and this instance clearly shows the spirit which pervades all the other precepts. It is an admonition in the close by the Lawgiver, that he ultimately regards the state of the mind. A human legislator aims at nothing more than the compliance of his subjects with the letter of the law. If they abstain from murder, theft, perjury, and other crimes, he does not concern himself with the motives; and, in fact, the heart lies beyond his jurisdiction. He cannot know the thoughts of other men, and observe what is passing in the interior of their souls. It is the same thing to him whether the laws are obeyed from conscience, from fear, or from a regard to self-interest; he has gained his end, when the peace of society is maintained. But the moral law has emanated from Him who is the Former of our spirits as well as of our bodies, has a right to the homage of both, and pays no regard to an action or a course of actions, unless the disposition from which it proceeds be such as he can approve. If a human governor could discover that the man who bows to him despises him in his heart, and that, amidst the most imposing appearances of respect, he harbours the feelings and the purpose of a traitor, he would set no value upon his hollow professions. The moral Governor of the universe sees the secret operations of the mind, and demands that we should serve him with our spirits as well as with our bodies. His law must therefore be understood to regulate the external sentiments and desires, as well as the actions to which they give rise, and to extend its authority in the first place to the former, as constituting what is most valuable in obedience. When it enjoins any duty, it enjoins the corresponding state of mind; when it forbids any sin, it forbids the appetite, or propensity which leads to it. In the Scriptures men are exhorted to “keep their hearts with all diligence, because out of them are the issues of life;”§ that is, from them their actions receive their moral character or denomination. The spirituality of the law is implied in the principle upon

\* Matth. xxii. 35—40.

† Rom. xiii. 9, 10.

‡ Ib. vii. 14.

§ Prov. v. 23.

which it is founded. It is the affection of love which is the source of all acceptable obedience.

Secondly, One species is used to denote all the different species of the same sin or duty; that is, when one form of a particular sin is forbidden, all the forms of that sin are forbidden; and when one form of a particular duty is enjoined, all the forms of that duty are also enjoined. The law says, "Thou shalt not kill;" but we must not limit this precept to the prohibition of actual murder alone. It forbids, at the same time, all injuries offered to the person of another, all malice and revenge, and all the expressions of malignant feeling. Our Saviour has authorized this explanation: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and, whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say unto his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire."\* The law says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" but besides the sin specified, it forbids incest, fornication, unnatural lusts, and not these alone, but all sensual desires. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."† On the other hand, when we are commanded to have no other gods before God, we are commanded not only to acknowledge that he alone is the living and true God, but to make him the object of all the love, and reverence, and confidence, to which his infinite excellencies give him an unquestionable title. When he commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves, he commands us to esteem him for his virtues, to be grateful to him for his kindness, to sympathize with him in his infirmities, to comfort him in his sorrows, to assist him in difficulties; in a word, to perform all the good offices which love naturally suggests, and by which its sincerity is expressed.

In the third place, Negative precepts are contained in affirmative, and affirmative precepts in negative. When any duty is enjoined, the contrary sin is forbidden; and when any sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is enjoined. It has been said, that as in the Scriptures there are more things than words, so in the precepts and prohibitions there is more than the words express. The law is not to be subjected to that kind of interpretation which brings any thing out of any thing; but its sense is to be diligently explored. As the good prescribed by the law cannot be performed unless the opposite evil be guarded against, nor the evil prohibited be avoided unless the opposite good be performed, it follows, that negative precepts include the affirmative, and affirmative precepts the negative. When the law forbids us to steal, or take away unjustly the property of our neighbour, it requires us to promote his temporal interests, as far as we have ability and opportunity. When it forbids us to kill, or unjustly to deprive him of life, it commands us to use the means of preserving his life, to give him the counsel, the warnings, and the assistance which are necessary for his safety. In these cases, affirmative precepts are included in the negative. When the law commands us to honour our parents, it forbids neglect of them, contempt for them, or the doing of any thing which may be injurious or offensive to them. When it commands us to sanctify the Sabbath, it forbids all worldly employments and recreations, and every thing, in a word, which is inconsistent with the sacred rest and holiness of the day. In these instances, the negative precepts are included in the affirmative. It appears from the precepts of both kinds, that the duty of men consists not simply in abstinence from evil, but also in the practice of good; and we may farther infer, that the law of God is exceedingly broad, extending its authority in every direction, and subjecting the whole of human life to its control.

\* Matth. v. 21, 22.

† Ib. 27, 28.



In the fourth place, When the law forbids a sin, it forbids all the causes of it; and when it enjoins a duty, it enjoins also the means by which we shall be enabled to perform it. Thus, when it prohibits uncleanness, it prohibits drunkenness and gluttony, and all the provocatives of the sensual appetites; when it prohibits theft, it prohibits covetous desires and idleness, which may prompt us to steal, by reducing us to want; when it enjoins justice, it enjoins diligence in business, prudence in conducting our affairs, and economy, that we may be able to satisfy every lawful demand upon us. And hence it follows, that if a man has brought himself by indolence, folly, and extravagance, into such a situation that he cannot pay his debts, he is not so much to be pitied as to be condemned, and instead of calling him unfortunate, we should say that he is criminal.

In the fifth place, Negative precepts are always binding, but positive precepts oblige only in certain circumstances. It is never lawful to murder, to steal, to commit adultery, to bear false witness against our neighbour. No situation can occur in which a man shall be permitted to do any of these things. The strongest temptations will not exculpate him. These precepts never bend to circumstances; a man is bound to refrain, although he should expose himself to the loss of his life. Positive precepts bind us always when the duties which they enjoin may be performed; but certain conditions are supposed, which may be wanting, and there are fit seasons, which do not always occur. We are required to honour our parents; but as the obligation ceases when they die, so, during their life, we cannot give them the usual tokens of honour, when we are removed to a distance from them. We ought to minister to the wants of the indigent; but to do so is not our duty, if we are ourselves so poor that we have nothing to spare. We ought to worship God, but we cannot be constantly engaged in acts of devotion. We must spend much of our time in prosecuting our business, and in conversing with our fellow-men about necessary affairs. The command requires us to worship him only at the stated times, and on such other occasions as are suggested by the state of our own minds, and the circumstances in which we are placed. It has been justly remarked, that the positive precept concerning love to God must be excepted, which is obligatory at all times; there being no season, place, or state, in which it is not our duty to love him with all our heart. We may make the same remark concerning love to our neighbour, which is also binding at all times; and the observation which has been made respecting positive precepts, relates only to the particular modes of expressing our love to both.

In the sixth place, There is another rule mentioned by Divines, which, however, is not directly to the purpose, as it does not help to interpret the law, but is intended to point out the relative importance of its duties. The rule is, that the precepts of the second table of the law must give place to those of the first, when both cannot be obeyed. The following instances have been given to illustrate the rule. The love of our relations must be subordinate to the love of God; and our Lord has said that we must hate father and mother, when fidelity to him requires us to do so.\* Again, when the commands of our earthly superiors interfere with the commands of God, we must prefer the latter to the former. But these are rather apparent than real illustrations, because it will appear, on reflection, that in such cases there is no interference of duties. The authority of men over others is limited, and ceases the moment that it is exercised in requiring any thing unlawful. When the commands of parents and magistrates are opposed to the commands of God, there is no choice of duties; the will of God is the sole obligation which an enlightened conscience will acknowledge. Our duty to God and our duty to man must always be consistent, because the one is the measure of the other; and instead of talking loosely of a possible opposition between them, it is more accurate to say

\* Luke xiv. 26.

that, whatever human laws and customs may require from us, whatever natural affection or self-interest may prompt us to do, whatever our superiors may expect from us, their claims are unjust, and ought to be disregarded, when offence would be given to God by our compliance. As he is the First and the Last, so great that all other beings are as nothing when compared with him, we are always bound to sacrifice for his glory, all that is most tender and valuable in our connexion with our fellow-creatures. There can be no jarring moral obligations; and it is ignorance or inattention which makes them appear incompatible. We can never owe that to man which God claims for himself. Love to God is the first and great commandment; and the second, or love to our neighbour, is subordinate, but not contrary to it. It is remarkable that a case mentioned in Scripture, in which one duty is made to yield to another, relates to the first table. What is positive in it, gives place to what is moral in the second, according to these words, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," or, "rather than sacrifice."\* We are permitted to violate the rest of the Sabbath by works of mercy, for the relief and preservation of men and animals, and by works of necessity, as the preparation of our food, the extinguishing of fire, the carrying away of property exposed to an inundation, &c. Let it be observed, that the law of the Sabbath is not repealed in such cases, but admits these exceptions, that other duties which cannot be deferred may be performed. The exceptions, if I may speak so, are a part of the law.

Lastly, I shall briefly mention one other rule,—that whatever the law requires us to do, we are bound to endeavour, in our several stations, to make others do. It is their duty to glorify God as well as ours; and zeal for his glory will excite us to use all lawful means that it may be promoted by them. This end is to be gained not only by our example, but by our instructions, and counsels, and entreaties, and reproofs, and by the proper exercise of our authority over those whom Providence has placed in subjection to us. Every man, for example, is bound to see the Sabbath sanctified by all under his roof; for thus says the law, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates."

These rules have been laid down for the interpretation of the law; and by the judicious application of them, with the assistance afforded by other passages of Scripture, we may deduce from the ten precepts of the decalogue all the duties which we owe to God and to man. It is a complete code of morality. As no man can attempt without impiety to take any thing from it, so there is no need that any thing should be added to it. When Socinians affirm that Christ has corrected and enlarged the law, they unjustly accuse it of imperfection in its original form; and they totally misapprehend the design of his commentaries upon it in the Gospels, which was not to new-model the law, but to free it from the corrupt interpretations which the Scribes had given of it, on the authority of tradition. He evidently recognized its perfection in his answer, formerly quoted, to the question, "Which is the first and great commandment?" and the Apostle Paul, who was enlightened by his Spirit, pronounced it to be "holy, just, and good."†

The obligation of the moral law is universal. All men, in every region of the earth, are subject to its authority. It was the law given to man at his creation, from which his subsequent apostasy could not release him; it is founded in relations which subsist wherever there are human beings endowed with reason and volition. The other laws given to the Jews were national and local. The ceremonial law could not be practised in all its parts but within narrow limits. The temple could not be resorted to on all necessary occasions,

\* Matth. ix. 13.

† Matth. xxii. 37. Rom. vii. 12.



nor the three annual festivals be observed in Jerusalem by persons whose usual residence was in the remote countries of Asia, Africa, and Europe. It does not appear that circumcision was incumbent upon any but the descendants of the twelve patriarchs, with whose father, Abraham, the covenant was made; nor is it to be supposed that if a heathen, at a great distance from Jerusalem, had attained to the knowledge of the true God, and became a devout worshipper of him, he was bound to conform to the Mosaic ritual, and that his sacrifices would not have been accepted if they were offered upon any other altar than that of Jerusalem. There is no doubt that then, as well as now, in every nation, he who feared God and wrought righteousness was accepted of him.\* The peculiarity of the judicial law is still more unquestionable. It was the civil law of the Jews, intended solely for the government of their nation; to which, therefore, other nations were not more subject than men living in one country are at present subject to the laws of another. Nay, some things were enjoined upon the Jews, which by other nations are considered as unlawful; for example, the marriage of a widow to the brother of her deceased husband who had died without children. The ceremonial law is therefore abolished, as is also the judicial law, so far as it did not embody the moral precepts, which are of perpetual obligation. But while the authority of certain ordinances, religious and civil, extended only to the Jews, the decalogue is the law of all nations. Morality is not the subject of positive institution, and of human regulation. It is not determined by geographical boundaries, so that what is right on one side of a river or mountain is wrong on the other, and virtue and vice exchange characters according to changes of climate. Piety towards God, truth, justice, and charity towards men, and the exercise of temperance, or self-government, are duties in every country under heaven. The moral law is the rule of our present conduct, and will be the rule of our future judgment.

From what has been said, it is evident that the obligation of this law is perpetual. As it binds all men who at present exist, it will for the same reason bind all succeeding generations. It has constituted an essential part of all the divine dispensations. It was the rule of duty to man in his primeval state, and obedience to it was the condition of the covenant into which his Maker entered with him in the name of his posterity. It was solemnly promulgated to the Israelites from Sinai, and a curse was denounced upon every man who should not continue in all the things which were written in it to do them. Jesus Christ has adopted it into his religion, re-enacted it, if I may speak so, by his authority, and commanded all his disciples to conform to it. He came not to destroy, but to fulfil it; and as he himself obeyed its precepts, and submitted to its sanction, by dying in the room of his people, so he declared it to be his own law, and admonishes us that he will disown every man who neglects or violates its precepts, whatever respect he may profess for him. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"† There cannot be a more erroneous view of his religion than to suppose, that it sets men free from the obligations of morality. The error first made its appearance in the apostolic age, as we learn from the Epistle of James, which was written to refute those who expected to be saved by a faith not accompanied with works; and it has been adopted in succeeding ages, because it accords so well with the natural wish to enjoy impunity in sin. We pronounce the man to be a heretic who denies the Trinity, or the atonement, or original sin, or justification by faith, or the necessity of the influences of the Spirit; but be assured that there is not a greater heresy than to teach that by the gospel we are exempted from the authority of the law. It transforms the holy religion of Christ into a system of impurity; it turns the grace of God into licentiousness.

\* Acts x. 35.

† Luke vi. 46.

The moral law is an emanation from the holiness of God; and when it is imprinted upon our hearts by the Spirit, we are changed into the image of God. To produce this effect is the design of the death of Christ, of his ministrations in heaven, of the operations of grace, the institutions of the Gospel, and the dispensations of Providence. Only the half of the work of redemption is performed, when men are delivered from the punishment of sin: to emancipate them from its dominion, to eradicate the love of it, to render them obedient to God, to inspire them with a sacred respect to his will, this is the other half, and is surely of equal importance. And the whole design will be accomplished when grace shall triumph in the pardon of their sins, and the complete sanctification of their souls; and the love which the law requires shall reign without a rival in every heart, and shine in every action.

## LECTURE CIII.

### ON THE LAW OF GOD.

Division of the Decalogue into two Tables.—Statement of the Sins Forbidden and Duties Enjoined in the First, the Second, and the Third Commandments.

HAVING made some general observations upon the law, and laid down general rules to be observed in explaining it, I proceed to consider its precepts in their order.

It was originally written upon two tables, in order, it should seem, to distinguish the two classes of precepts which the decalogue contains. This is the only reason which we can conceive why it was engraven upon two tables rather than upon one. There have been different opinions, however, respecting the division of the precepts. Josephus assigns five to each table, and has been followed in this arrangement by one or two authors; but their mistake is evident. The precepts naturally fall under the two general heads of love to God and love to man; and to the first none properly belong but four, which immediately respect our Maker; the other six being the modes in which our love to man should be expressed. Besides, when the Apostle calls the fifth precept, “the first commandment with promise,”\* we are sure that he does not mean that it is the first in the decalogue; and we must understand his words to import, that it held the first place in the second table delivered to Moses. Some assign to the first only three precepts, not by transferring the fourth to the second table, but by joining together the first and the second, because they consider the latter as a continuation of the former. This was the idea of some of the Fathers, and it has been adopted by the Church of Rome, for an obvious reason. Standing separately, it forbids the use of images in the worship of God, and plainly condemns the practice of that church; but viewed as an appendix to the first precept, it only forbids, as they pretend, the worship of the images of false gods; and, consequently, leaves them at liberty to worship the images which they have consecrated to the honour of the true God and his saints. They seem, however, to be sensible of the weakness of this argument, and for this reason have been accustomed to leave it out of their books which were intended for the inspection of the people, lest, being incapable of entering

\* Eph. vi. 2.



into their subtle distinctions, and interpreting the law according to its obvious sense, they should begin to suspect that the service in which they are daily engaged is idolatry. The surest way to prevent a discovery is to dismiss the witness, without allowing him to speak. Two precepts being turned into one, there remain only nine; and the question therefore occurs, Where are the ten? To solve this difficulty, Papists split the tenth precept into two, making "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house," one; and the words which follow, another. We cannot give this division the praise of ingenuity; we must call it barefaced impudence. There never was a precept delivered by any lawgiver, which was more clearly one and indivisible. The whole of it relates to one subject, covetousness, or unlawful desire; and the words, "Thou shalt not covet," are repeated merely to enforce the prohibition, by prefixing it to the different classes of objects which ought not to excite our cupidity. The Apostle Paul speaks plainly of it as one precept, when he says, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."\*

The four precepts of the first table of the law relate immediately to God. The first points out the object of worship; while it forbids us to have any other God before him, it calls upon us to acknowledge and worship him alone. The second prescribes the means of worship, not by images or any other plan of human invention, but by the rites and ordinances which are divinely appointed. The third declares the manner in which the service of God should be performed, namely, with reverence, as opposed to profaneness and every abuse of religious institutions. The fourth specifies the time of worship, to-wit, one day in seven, which is to be wholly devoted to God; not however to the exclusion of other seasons which the events of providence may point out, and the regular devotional exercises of every day.

We shall begin with the first commandment. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." In explaining the precepts, whether negative or positive, our church-catechism lays down first what is required, and secondly, what is forbidden. It is not material what order is observed, provided that the import of the precepts is unfolded; but the most natural mode, I apprehend, of expounding a negative precept, is first, to show what it forbids, and then, according to the rule formerly mentioned, to give an account of the opposite duties which it enjoins.

This precept forbids, in the first place, atheism, which may be divided into explicit and constructive. Explicit atheism consists in the formal denial of the existence of God. He is an atheist who excludes from the universe any other intelligence than that of the human mind; says that it is eternal; that there is nothing in it but matter and motion, and talks of nature, and chance, and fate,—words which have no meaning, but serve as a substitute in discourse for the name of a living, designing Agent, by whom all things were created and are governed. Atheism is so contrary, not only to the general sentiments of mankind, but to the clearest deductions of reason, that some have supposed it to be impossible that any man could be an atheist, and have thought that those who were reputed atheists in ancient times were falsely charged with this crime, because they treated the gods, who were commonly worshipped, with contempt. It is not necessary to examine whether this opinion is true or false, because, whatever judgment may be pronounced upon certain old philosophers, some of the moderns have put the matter out of doubt by an undisguised avowal of their unbelief. Atheists have appeared in our own age, and in our own country.—By constructive atheism, I mean sentiments which amount to the denial of God, or lead to this conclusion, although they do not formally express it. Such atheism was charged upon Epicurus and his followers, who, as Cicero says, granted in words that there were gods, but in reality took them

\* Rom. vii. 7.

away, because they represented them as removed to a distance from mortals, and taking no interest in their affairs. The charge may be brought, with equal justice, against those who deny the providence of God; who consider him as limited in essence and knowledge, as did the elder Socinians; or divest him of any of his attributes, and substitute in the room of the transcendently just and all-perfect Being of the Scriptures, a God fashioned according to their own likeness, an idol of their own brain. Under this head, we may include what is called practical atheism, by which is meant such conduct as virtually contradicts the profession of the lips; and accordingly, an Apostle speaks of some, "who profess to know God, but in works deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate."\* And certainly the man, whose profane and lawless conduct indicates that he has renounced the authority of God, or calls in question his omnipotence and his justice, is guilty of violating the precept,—which requires a practical, and not merely a verbal, acknowledgment of him,—as well as the man who ventures to impugn his existence.

In the second place, this precept forbids polytheism. Idolatry was introduced long before the time when the law was published from Sinai. It existed in Chaldea while Abraham sojourned there; and it seems that this patriarch was a worshipper of false gods before he was called to leave his country and his kindred. By the time of the Exodus, the evil had spread far and wide; and we have reason to believe that polytheism prevailed among all nations, although there might still be some individuals who continued exclusively to adore the Creator of heaven and earth. The design of the call of Abraham was to separate his descendants from the apostate race, and to constitute them a peculiar people, among whom the knowledge and worship of Jehovah should be preserved till the fulness of time, when he would again reveal himself to the nations of the world, and destroy the gods of the Gentiles. We see, therefore, a peculiar reason for this command, and for the solemn words with which it is introduced: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." He had manifested himself as the God of the Israelites by their recent redemption, in accomplishing which he had shown himself to be greater than the deities of their oppressors, according to his words to Moses, "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment;" and they who had witnessed the displays of his power were bound to worship him alone. By this precept, the religions of all heathen nations are condemned. They are directly opposed to the fundamental doctrine of the unity of the Divine essence; and they either exclude the true God, or they associate others with him as sharers in the honours to which he alone is entitled.

If the polytheism of the Gentiles is condemned by this precept, there can be no doubt that the worship given to saints and angels in the Church of Rome is equally forbidden. Churches are dedicated to them as well as to God; the most solemn services of religion are performed in honour of them; pilgrimages are undertaken to the places which they are understood to favour, and in which their pretended relics are deposited; they are invoked in the most humble postures, and in the usual forms of supplication; their assistance is implored, and thanks are returned to them for benefits which they are supposed to have conferred; and, in short, they receive all the honours which the heathens pay to their male and female deities, and all the honours which are paid to God himself. Papists pretend that they make a distinction in the kind or degree of worship, and call that which is given to God *latría*, and that which is given to the saints *dulia*. This is an arbitrary use of the terms, which, in the Greek language, are promiscuously employed to express services performed to God,

\* Tit. i. 16.



or to men. When they tell us, therefore, that they worship God with *latría*, and the saints with *dulia*, they tell us nothing but what any other two words in the Greek language would have expressed equally well, namely, that they do not give precisely the same kind of worship to both. But, however much they may distinguish in theory, the greater part make no distinction in practice. The saints are honoured as highly as God, and in some cases more. Their churches are more frequented; more vows and offerings are made to them; and when it is supposed that, for the sake of the respect which has been punctually shown to them, a whole life of sin will be forgiven, is not the creature exalted above the Creator?

It is quite unnecessary to enter into the controversy on this subject between Protestants and Papists, and to examine the distinctions by which the latter endeavour to evade the charge of idolatry. If the Gentiles were condemned by an Apostle because they did service to them who by nature were not Gods, we cannot see how pretended Christians should be excused who address their worship to similar objects. It will not be denied that the latter are not Gods by nature; and if there was a reason why the heathen deities should not be worshipped, it holds equally good with respect to angels and saints, who are as really creatures as those who adore them. Their physical and moral qualities, the rank to which they are elevated, and the happiness which they enjoy, make no difference; still they want what is the sole foundation of religious homage, a divine nature and divine perfections, infinite knowledge, almighty power, and inexhaustible goodness. It would make no difference, although, as Papists suppose, they were invested with authority over men; because it would be infinitely inferior to that of the Supreme Lord, and could entitle them to nothing more than a degree, proportioned to their dignity of the respect which we owe to our earthly superiors. But their authority is taken for granted, and cannot be proved from Scripture. With regard to any intercourse between the glorified saints and men in the present state, it maintains profound silence; and the angels it represents, not as rulers, but as servants: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation?"\*

The practice of the Church of Rome is directly in the face of the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." They do not expressly call the saints gods, although they distinguish them by the title of *divi*, which the heathens gave to their deified heroes and princes; but he is acknowledged as a God, to whom we pray, and on whom we depend for temporal and spiritual blessings, whatever name we appropriate to him. Their practice is contrary to the words of the law quoted by our Saviour, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."† It is vain to pretend that this command is obeyed by giving supreme worship to him, and subordinate to others; for the manifest design of it is to appropriate all religious worship to him; and besides, two kinds of worship are a mere human figment, of which not a trace is found in the Scriptures. There is not a precept for the worship or religious invocation of creatures; nor an example, except among the heathens, and some obscure heretics in the apostolic age, who first introduced the idolatry which the Church of Rome has since patronized, and who were condemned for worshipping angels by Paul in the Epistle to the Colossians. In a word, it is certain that the invocation of the saints was unknown in the primitive church, as some popish writers of great eminence have acknowledged. It rests solely upon the authority of the church, which, in matters of religion, is not worth a rush.

Negative precepts virtually enjoin the duties opposed to the sins which they forbid. The first commandment requires us to have our mind fully established

\* Heb. i. 14.

† Matth. iv. 10.

in the doctrine of the existence of God; and to acknowledge him only, to the exclusion of every rival, whether set up by Heathens or by idolatrous Christians. It requires us to entertain worthy sentiments of his character and perfections; and with this view to attend to the discoveries which he has made of himself in his works, and particularly in his word. It requires us to be duly affected by those discoveries, to cherish and exercise the affections of which he is the proper object, as reverence for his majesty, profound humility, trust in his promises, desires for his favour, dependence upon his care, and submission to his will; and in a word, to love him with all our strength, preferring him to all creatures in heaven and on earth, cultivating communion with him, and deriving our satisfaction from the uncreated source of felicity. It requires us to render to him the honour to which he is entitled, not only by those affections of our hearts, but by such outward expressions of homage as he himself has prescribed,—to pray to him, to praise him, and devoutly to observe all his institutions. It requires us to make him our last end; and as he has created all things for his glory, to have this as our predominant wish and constant aim, that we may glorify him with our bodies and our spirits, which are his.

This is a summary of the duties enjoined by the first precept, upon which it would be easy to enlarge; but an enumeration and illustration of them will be found in any exposition of the Decalogue. It is evident that an acknowledgment of God, does not complete the design of the precept, unless it be accompanied with those feelings and actions which are included in the idea of piety. A man may be a Theist, and yet a transgressor of this law, because he does not fear, and love, and serve, that great and glorious Being in whose existence he professes to believe.

Let us proceed to the second precept, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.” I have already hinted what is the difference between this and the first commandment. The first declares the object of worship, and the second prescribes the means, forbidding the use of images, and consequently of every other form which has not been appointed by himself. It is unnecessary to enter into a critical examination of the words translated “graven image,” and “likeness;” because it is plain to every person who is willing to understand, that they signify every external representation of visible or invisible objects employed for religious purposes.

It is obvious that the making of images is not absolutely forbidden, as some persons have supposed. It is no transgression of this precept to form representations of terrestrial or celestial objects for amusement and ornament, or to recall the memory of the dead, and to do honour to those who have deserved well of their country, or of mankind. It is an over-straining of the law to expound it as being hostile to the fine arts of statuary and painting. If the design of the precept be considered, which is manifest from its connexion, it will be found to relate solely to religion, and to condemn images and likenesses, whether engraven or drawn with the pencil, only when they are made the objects or the means of worship. The admission of images, of the saints into churches, where the adoration of them is not permitted, cannot be justly considered as a violation of this precept; for you may make a statue or a picture of a saint as well as of any other man, and may place it in a church as well as in a palace, provided that no abuse is likely to ensue; and the practice is chiefly condemnable, because it seems to symbolize with idolatry, and because it may tend to it by an undue impression upon the imaginations and feelings of the ignorant.

This precept absolutely condemns all representations of God, which it is



astonishing that any person should have attempted, who believed that his essence is spiritual and immense: "The Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice."\* What madness is it to imagine that any configuration of matter bears a resemblance to a Being who has no bodily parts! or, that a puny statue can convey an idea of him whom the heaven and the earth cannot contain! "To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." It is true that the Almighty is described as "the Ancient of days, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool;"† but does it follow that Papists may exhibit him in the form of an old man? Do they not know that this was an emblematic vision; and that, in whatever manner God might reveal himself to the eyes or to the imagination of a prophet, we are expressly prohibited to portray him in any visible shape? By every attempt of this kind, he is highly dishonoured; he is degraded to a level with his creatures, and the glory of the incorruptible God is changed into the image of corruptible man. It is equally improper to represent the Holy Ghost under the figure of a dove; first, because it is not certain that he appeared in this figure at the baptism of Christ,—the words of the Evangelist perhaps signifying only the apparent motion of the sign which indicated his descent,—and, secondly, because if the visible shape was that of a dove, it was merely an emblem; the design of which is perverted when it is changed into an image of that Divine Person, who has no corporeal form and lineaments. It may seem that it is more justifiable to make an image of our Saviour, because he was and is a man. But the vanity of such images is evident, because they are not true representations of the object, and have their origin solely in the imagination of the statuary or the painter. The only account which antiquity has transmitted to us of the personal appearance of our Saviour, is apocryphal. But although the account were true, and an image were modelled in exact conformity to it, it might be asked, Does it resemble him now in his glorified state? And, besides, it is not the human nature of Christ which our minds should contemplate, but the incarnate Redeemer, God and man in one person; and his person can be represented by no material form. Images of him as a man, with a glory encircling his head, and images of him hanging on the cross, are teachers of lies.

Farther, This precept forbids images, although they do not profess to be similitudes of any of the persons of the God-head, but are only intended to be emblematical representations. Every visible form which is designed to recall God to our thoughts, and to excite our devotions, and before which we perform our religious offices, is prohibited. The precept is delivered in the most comprehensive terms: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any likeness of any thing which is in the heavens above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth." There is a reference to the images used by the Gentiles, which were of various forms, and were representations of objects in all the departments of nature; and they are all without exception condemned. They may be distinguished into two classes; some of them represented the false gods whom they worshipped, as Baal and Ashtaroth among the eastern nations, and in the west, Jupiter, Apollo, and Minerva. The worshipping of such images was properly a transgression of the first commandment, which requires us to give religious honours to Jehovah alone. Others again represented by emblems the Creator of heaven and earth, as the golden calf which the Israelites made in the wilderness, after the example of the Egyptians, who worshipped a sacred bull as the representative of Apis, one of their gods. It is remarkable that the feast which they proclaimed is called a feast to Jehovah. It is against the use of such images that the second commandment is directed. The

\* Deut. iv. 12.

† Dan. vii. 9.

error which it condemns relates, not to the object of worship, but to the manner of worshipping him; and the use of images is specified as the grossest and most palpable violation of the precept.

The advocates of image worship endeavour to evade the precept by subtle distinctions. They tell us that there are two kinds of adoration, the one absolute and the other relative, and that the image is the object only of relative worship; that is, the worship does not terminate upon the image itself, but passes from it to the original. Again they tell us, that in an image two things are to be considered,—the matter of which it is composed, gold, silver, wood, or stone, and its representative character. Considered as a material substance, it ought not to be adored; but as an image or representation it is entitled to respect. These however were the identical distinctions by which the heathens attempted to vindicate themselves, when they were accused of idolatry by the Christians. It was only relative worship which they offered to their idols; the ultimate objects of their adoration were the invisible beings whom they believed to be divine. They were not so stupid as to think, that any kind of matter was in itself the proper object of worship; the image did not begin to be honoured, till having been finished by the hand of the artist, it was consecrated to the service of the god for whom it was designed. As Papists find it necessary to defend themselves with the arguments of the heathens, it is plain that they are guilty of the same crime and involved in the same condemnation. All their subtleties vanish before the plain words of the precept, “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, and serve them.”

Our church says, that “the second commandment forbids the worshipping of God by images, or in any other way not appointed in his word;”<sup>\*</sup> or more fully in the larger Catechism, that it forbids “all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; corrupting the worship of God, adding to it or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever.”<sup>†</sup> This exposition is founded on the principle already laid down, that when one species of a sin is forbidden, all the other species of the same sin are also forbidden. There is no doubt a particular reason why images are forbidden, because they are in themselves dishonorable to God, by investing Him, who is a pure and infinite Spirit, with a corporeal form, and degrading him to a level with the lowest of his creatures. But the design of the precept was to establish this principle, that as God is the sole object of religious worship, so it is his prerogative to dictate the mode of it. This matter is of too much importance to be subjected to the regulations of human wisdom. To the mind of man, blinded as it is by sin, and misled by the imagination and the passions, observances might recommend themselves by the pretext of fitness and decency, which the Supreme Being would reject as incongruous to his nature and character. We see the childishness, the absurdity, and the impiety of its devices in the numerous rites of Heathenism, and in the multiplied services of those Christians, who have deformed the worship of God under the pretext of adorning it, and robbed it of its native purity by arraying it in the meretricious garb of superstition. The precept which we are now explaining condemns all will-worship, that is, all human inventions in the service of God. He has declared to us in his word what form is acceptable to him; and it is a high offence to add to it or take from it. We have an example of both crimes in the Church of Rome, which has mutilated some of the ordinances of Christ, and corrupted others by foreign mixtures and appendages. It has also introduced new ordinances, of which not a word is spoken in the Scriptures, as the use of images, prayer to the saints, five spuri-

<sup>\*</sup> Short. Cat. Q. 51.

<sup>†</sup> Larg. Cat. Q. 109.



ous sacraments, pilgrimages and penances, and a multitude of observances, which it would be tedious to mention. Nor are those protestants free from the charge who have retained some of the usages of popery, and enjoin the wearing of particular vestments by the ministers of religion, the sign of the cross in baptism, bowing at the name of Jesus, and kneeling at the Lord's Supper. These practices we justly call superstitious, because there is no scriptural warrant for them, and they are the devices of men. The question, "Who hath required this at your hands?" the abettors and advocates of will-worship cannot answer; and it were well if they would consider the words of God concerning the Jews, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."\*

This precept requires us to entertain worthy ideas of God, as a spiritual Being, of whom no representation should be formed, either with the hand or by the imagination, and to honour him with spiritual worship. In particular, it requires us to adhere to his own institutions in opposition to all human devices, to receive them with due submission to his authority, to observe them with outward reverence and inward sentiments of devotion, to maintain them in their purity and integrity, exactly as he has delivered them to us, neither adding to them, as those do who make use of the sign of the cross in baptism, nor taking from them, as Papists do, who in the Lord's Supper withhold the cup from the laity. The ordinances of religion are prayer, praise, the preaching of the word, and the celebration of the sacraments; to which may be added church government, the exercise of discipline, and other particulars which it is unnecessary to mention. It is evident, as I have already hinted, that while the prescribed forms of worship should be punctually observed, the precept calls for those dispositions and exercises of mind of which they are significant, and which only can give them value, and render them acceptable to the omniscient God, who looks not upon the countenance, but upon the heart.

This precept is enforced by the following words: "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." Here a difficulty occurs, relating to the denunciation upon the posterity of transgressors. Some consider it is peculiar to the Jews, who were placed under a dispensation of temporal rewards and punishments, and understand it to import, that under such a dispensation, by the over-ruling providence of God, a man's family would be placed in such circumstances as should accord with his conduct, or that their degradation and suffering would be the effect of his sin; just as under human governments the children of traitors are deprived of their honours, and the family estate is confiscated, or as in the common course of things, a person of profligate manners entails disease, and poverty, and disgrace upon his offspring. Others have thought that the denunciation relates to those who should imitate the conduct of their parents; and consequently, that it was for their own sin, and not properly for that of their parents, that they should be punished. But besides that the words thus understood constitute no sanction or enforcement of the precept, and do not serve the purpose for which they are manifestly introduced, it is impossible to assign a reason why the third and fourth generation only are mentioned, since it is certain that God will visit to the thousandth generation those who tread in the steps of their idolatrous ancestors. Others again are of opinion, that not only temporal but spiritual judgments are denounced; that for the sins of the parents God withholds his grace from their children; and that being left to themselves, they follow the example of their parents, and are finally punished for their own sins. There is a degree of confusion in this statement, which first admits that they are punish-

\* Matth. xv. 9.

ed for the sin of their parents, and then brings forward their own sin to account for the justice of their final allotment. It is exceedingly difficult to determine the precise import of the words. If we could satisfactorily show that the threatening related to the Jews alone, and was founded on their peculiar dispensation, and that what was threatened was merely a temporal penalty upon the families of idolaters, considered as members of the state, it would be more easy to reconcile it to our ideas of the equity of the divine administration. There seems to be a contradiction between it and the words of God by Ezekiel: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father."\* We might reconcile them by supposing the original law, which was merely a positive one, to be revoked; or we may consider the words of Ezekiel as referring to a particular case. The Israelites had adopted this proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,"† intimating that their present sufferings were owing not to their own sins, but to those of their ancestors. To repel this accusation against his procedure, God declares that the case was not as they supposed, that he was punishing them for their own sins; that it was far from him to confound the righteous with the wicked, and that every man among them should be rewarded according to his works.

The Third precept of the law is in these words, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

By the name of God, we understand the name or names by which he has made himself known, or is distinguished from other beings; as God, Lord, Jehovah, the Almighty, &c. To take this name, is to use it in discourse; and one form of using it, which claims our attention in the first place, is swearing by it. As a simple declaration may not be deemed sufficient, when the character of the speaker is unknown, his motives are suspected, or the matter is of too much importance to be lightly determined, men have been accustomed to demand the confirmation of it with an oath, or an appeal to God as the witness of our veracity, and the Judge who will punish us if we are guilty of deceit. Some ancient sects, and some modern, have denied the lawfulness of an oath, and have affirmed that it is sinful to swear upon any occasion. Their opinion is refuted by a variety of arguments. We have examples of oaths in the Old Testament, with directions how to swear, namely, in truth, judgment, and righteousness; and lest any should think that what was formerly tolerated is now prohibited, we have examples also in the New. When Paul says, "I call God for a record upon my soul"—"God is my witness"—"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost;"‡ his language in all these instances, and particularly in the two first, amounts to an oath. Our Saviour recognized the lawfulness of an oath, when one having been administered to him, according to the form of his country, he broke the silence which he hitherto observed, and answered the question of the High Priest.§ It is impossible to understand the words of the Apostle in any other way than as a sanction of the practice, when he says, "Men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife."|| It is a misapprehension of our Saviour's words, "Swear not at all,"¶ to consider them as an absolute prohibition of an oath; because it is plain from his own illustration, that he meant only to forbid the practice of swearing in common conversation, and particularly of swearing by creatures.

An oath should be sworn only on such occasions as call for this solemnity, about matters of importance, and with respect to which satisfaction cannot be

\* Ezek. xviii. 20.

§ Matth. xxvi. 63.

† Ib. 2.

‡ Heb. vi. 16.

§ 2 Cor. i. 23. Rom. i. 9. ix. i.

¶ Matth. v. 34.



otherwise obtained. God is too great and awful a Being to be appealed to as a witness for every trifling purpose. It should be taken with external and internal reverence, and be regarded not as a mere ceremony, but as a religious institution, which places us in the immediate presence of the Judge of men and angels. We should be fully acquainted with the subject of an oath; for, to swear to any thing of which we are ignorant, or about which we are in doubt, is at once to deceive men, and to set at nought the divine omniscience. We should take an oath according to the obvious meaning of it, in the sense in which it is understood by those who administer it, to the exclusion of all private interpretations, and all mental reservations. We ought to be sincere in giving a promissory oath, having a fixed intention to perform what we pledge ourselves to do, and never thinking ourselves released from the obligation except by such a change of circumstances as renders it physically impossible to redeem our pledge, or would make it sinful to do so, because some other duty of paramount authority has intervened. It is plain, therefore, that we should never bind ourselves by oath to do any thing which we know to be impossible, any thing which we know to be morally wrong, any thing which would impede our duty to God, or to such of our fellow-men as have a prior claim to our service and obedience.

The name of God is taken in vain when we swear unnecessary oaths; when we swear implicitly, without knowing beforehand the nature and extent of the obligation, when we swear lightly and irreverently, using the name of God with as little respect as we would show to that of a man; when we swear falsely, attesting that to be true, which we do not know to be true, or which we know to be false; when we do not regard the *aminus imponentis*, but substitute a meaning of our own as a subterfuge, under which we may escape from the understood obligation; when we swear to what we know to be impossible, or what we know to be sinful; when we swear in doubt with respect to the practicability or the lawfulness of the action to which we bind ourselves; when we swear to release ourselves from a prior obligation, as the Jews devoted their property to God, that they might be relieved from the duty of supporting their parents.

These are not the only ways in which the name of God is profaned. It is taken in vain when it is lightly introduced in common conversation; when men swear by it in anger or in sport, or in the ordinary train of their discourse; when they utter impious imprecations upon themselves or others; or when, without the slightest feeling of devotion, they call upon him to bless, preserve, or help them. There is not a name in the universe with which so much freedom is used; it is treated as with studied contempt; and it is almost impossible to walk the streets, or to go into a mixed company, without hearing language which is always offensive to a pious ear, and which, were it heard for the first time, would awaken horror and alarm in every man who retained any sense of religion. In the commission of this gratuitous and heaven-daring sin, our own country has attained an infamous pre-eminence.

This precept is transgressed not only when men swear falsely, or profanely by the name of God, but also when they make use of any other oath in conversation; for in this, as in other precepts, all sins of the same kind are forbidden. Our Saviour says, "Swear not at all,"—that is, in common discourse,—"neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."\* It appears that such oaths as are here specified were frequent among the Jews; and our Lord, in forbidding these, condemns all

\* Matth. v. 34—37.

similar oaths, such as those which are current among Christians, who swear by their faith, their truth, their conscience, and in Popish countries, by the saints.

This precept forbids all kinds of blasphemy, all accusations of Providence, all reflections against Scripture, all dishonorable thoughts of God. It forbids the profanation or abuse of any thing by which he has made himself known. As it relates to the manner of worshipping him, it condemns irreverence, carelessness, formality, hypocrisy, and unbelief, in the performance of religious duties. We profane his word when we read or hear it with indifference; we profane the ordinance of prayer when we honour God with our lips but our hearts are far from him; when those sentiments of faith, and penitence, and holy desire are wanting, of which our words are expressive; we profane the ordinance of praise when we feel no admiration of his excellencies, and no gratitude for his favours, and when we appropriate to ourselves any share of the glory to which he has an exclusive title; we profane the Lord's Supper, not merely when we use it as a qualification for civil offices, but when we partake of it in a state of sin, in the absence of spiritual affections, without a cordial reliance upon the atonement which it commemorates, and an unreserved dedication of ourselves to him who died for us and rose again. We profane the ordinance of fasting, when our professions of repentance are not accompanied with humiliation of soul, when we use it as a means of obtaining the remission of our sins, or when we are careful to enumerate and condemn the sins of others, but slightly pass over our own. We profane Providence when we turn it to superstitious purposes, looking for signs from it to direct us where Scripture or even reason is sufficient to guide us; when we rashly and uncharitably interpret its proceedings; when we place an unwarranted dependence upon it, expecting the end without the means, venturing without a call upon danger in the hope of its protection, and trusting to it for the supply of our wants, when we are indulging ourselves in idleness.

From the sins forbidden in this commandment, it is easy to infer the duties required. They consist in general in a holy and reverent use of his name, of all his revelations, and all his institutions; and a more particular detail of them is unnecessary. It will be your business to trace them at your leisure, while you are meditating upon the subject. "The third commandment," says our Church, "requires that the name of God, his titles, attributes, ordinances, the word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, his works, and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word, and writing, by an holy profession, and answerable conversation, to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves and others."\*

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## LECTURE CIV.

### ON THE LAW OF GOD.

Commentary on the Fourth, the Fifth, and the Sixth Commandments.

HAVING considered the object, the means, and the manner of religious worship, let us now attend to the time which is consecrated to it. It is determined

\* Larger Catechism, Q. 112.

2 x 2



in the Fourth precept of the Decalogue, which is expressed in these words: "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it."

After reciting this precept, which was delivered to the Israelites in the wilderness, we are to inquire, Whether it was then given for the first time, or was only promulgated anew? To most persons, an answer to this question seems to be supplied by the words of Moses, in the second chapter of Genesis, "And on the seventh day, God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."\* These words have been commonly understood to signify, that the Sabbath was instituted at the creation. Some writers, however, are of a different opinion; and maintain that Moses speaks of it by anticipation; or that, as the reason why the Sabbath was given to men took place on the seventh day of the creation, he was led to make mention of it in this part of his narrative, although the observance did not commence till the Israelites were in the wilderness. In confirmation of this opinion, it is alleged that there is not a word said about the Sabbath during the long preceding period of two thousand and five hundred years; and that this silence is unaccountable, if it was regularly observed by the people of God. This, however, is merely a negative argument, from which no positive conclusion can be safely drawn; and, besides, it would disprove the practice of circumcision among the Jews from their entrance into Canaan to the circumcision of the Baptist, not one instance of it being recorded during that long interval. Another argument is founded on such expressions as these: God gave the Israelites a Sabbath, and he gave it for "a sign between him and them."† But his giving them the Sabbath no more implies that it was a new institution, than his giving them the other precepts supposes that they were not previously binding,—nothing more being meant in both cases, than that they were published anew to them, with peculiar circumstances of solemnity. The Sabbath may be said to be a sign, because the celebration of it would henceforth serve, with their other religious rites, to distinguish them from the nations of the world, and it was enforced by a new reason taken from their recent redemption. Hence, in the repetition of the precept, these words are added: "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day."‡ There does not appear to be any reason for supposing that in Genesis Moses speaks proleptically, or by anticipation. The manner of the narrative would naturally lead any reader to suppose that he is relating what took place at the beginning of the world. It is a second thought, and a thought which could occur only to a mind in search of ingenious discoveries, that the present tense is here significant of the future. This seems to be a strong objection against the opinion which we are considering; it is inconsistent with the perfect simplicity of the Mosaic history, and with the accuracy which is expected from any historian, to record as a fact which took place at the period of which he is writing, what did not take place for five-and-twenty centuries. It has been observed, that the division of time into weeks, which subsisted in the age of the patriarchs, cannot be satisfactorily accounted for, but by the previous in-

\* Gen. ii. 2, 3.

† Exod. xxxi. 13, 17. Ezek. xx. 12, 20.

‡ Deut. v. 15.

stitution of the Sabbath; for the creation was finished in six days, and if the seventh was not then sanctified, we cannot conceive how the ancients came to divide time by seven days, rather than by six, or eight, or ten. It has been observed, too, that a peculiar respect was paid to the seventh day by the Greeks. Some may suppose that they derived their idea of its sacredness from the Jews, but it is more probable that it was founded on tradition. Not only the Hebrews, but the Greeks, says Clemens Alexandrinus, acknowledge the seventh day. Hesiod calls the seventh day *λαμπρον φαιος η̄λιου*, "the splendid light of the sun;" and Homer characterizes it as *ῑερον η̄μαρ*, "the sacred day." I neglected to remark in the proper place, that the "end of the days" when Cain and Abel offered sacrifices,\* has been supposed to be the Sabbath; and that this also was the day, in the book of Job, when the sons of God came together.

It has been further observed, that the Sabbath is spoken of in Exodus before the publication of the decalogue, and is then mentioned, not as new, but as an institution already known: "To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord."† Some, indeed, draw an opposite conclusion, and consider these words as the first intimation of the Sabbath; but I think they are mistaken, because Moses appears only to remind them of it, as the reason of the injunction to gather a double quantity of manna on the preceding day, since none would fall on the next. If the Sabbath had been a new institution, he would have naturally informed them of its duties, whereas he confines himself to the single subject of the manna, forewarning them not to expect it on that day, and therefore to collect and prepare on the day before as much as would suffice till the Sabbath was past. It has also been thought, that the word with which the precept begins supposes a prior knowledge of the law. "*Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.*" It was an institution with which they were already acquainted; and they are called upon to keep in mind the sacred nature of the day, and to sanctify it with the greatest care, especially after this solemn republication of the precept. It is probable that it had been much neglected in Egypt; and as the Israelites were in a state of slavery, it is not likely that they would be permitted by their cruel task-masters to desist from work one day in seven. Through the necessity of their circumstances, and their own indifference, the observance of it might have been in a great measure suspended, and this may be the reason why it was inculcated anew, and their attention was so particularly called to it: "*Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.*"

The question respecting the date of the Sabbath is of the greater importance, because it is understood to affect the question respecting its morality. If it was given in the beginning, it is a law to mankind, binding in all ages and nations; if it was first given in the wilderness, it was a law to the Jews, which was abrogated with their other peculiar institutions; and some new evidence is necessary to prove that a day of rest should be observed by Christians.

There has been much discussion concerning the morality of the Sabbath, some affirming and others denying it; and several distinctions have been made with a view to ascertain what is moral, and what is positive, in the precept. In a former lecture, something was said upon this subject, when I was explaining the difference between moral and positive precepts.‡ It is a moral duty, that men should devote a portion of their time to the service of God, but the portion is the subject of positive command. Some express themselves as if they thought that the only thing which is positive in this precept is the prescription of the particular day; but if they use the term, moral, in its common acceptation when distinguished from positive, as signifying that which is founded in the nature of things, they will be at a loss to show that the nature of

\* Gen. iv. 3, marginal reading.

† Exod. xvi. 23.

‡ Lect. cii.



things, or the relation in which man stands to his Creator, requires that he should devote one day in seven to his immediate service. They will be at a loss to show that to have required more or less, would have been contrary to what is right and fit. It is acknowledged that the choice of the seventh day in preference to any other was positive; or that, although there was a reason for this choice, it was not permanent and immutable, so that no new reason could authorize a change to another day. It should also be acknowledged, in my apprehension, that the time allotted for the suspension of our worldly affairs, and undivided attention to the exercises of religion, might have been lengthened or shortened according to the good pleasure of God. It would have been more accurate in some of our Divines to have stated, that since a seventh part of our time has been required, the law is of perpetual obligation, instead of expressing themselves loosely, as if we were as much bound in the nature of things to set apart one day in seven, as it is acknowledged that we are to consecrate some portion of our time.

There is scarcely any difference of opinion among Christians with respect to the change of the day. Some learned men have thought that the original Sabbath was different from the Jewish, that the latter was put back from the first to the seventh day of the week; and they endeavour to prove this point by some facts in the history of the Israelites in the wilderness, and by the declaration that the Sabbath was given as a sign to them, and was intended to be a memorial of their deliverance from Egypt; to accomplish which purposes, it seems necessary that the day should have been altered. If this supposition could be satisfactorily proved, it might convince the Jews that the change, which Christians allege has now taken place in the day, is not unprecedented, and by no means involves an abrogation of the fourth precept of the Decalogue. It is not easy to see how it can be reconciled with the account in Genesis, which makes the seventh day the Sabbath; or how that day could be the first in a hebdomadal series, when it was preceded only by six.

For the change of the day from the seventh to the first, we cannot produce any positive precept; but we consider the example of the Apostles and of the primitive church under their direction as of equal authority, because they were infallibly guided by the spirit in all things relative to doctrine and worship. Immediately after the resurrection of Christ, the disciples began to assemble on the first day of the week; and by meeting repeatedly with them on that day, he gave countenance to the practice. It was continued after his ascension, and the mission of the Holy Ghost to lead them into all the truth. Thus at Troas, "when the disciples came together on the first day to break bread, Paul preached to them;"\* and the time of meeting is manifestly mentioned as the usual one. On that day the Corinthians were commanded to "lay by them in store, as the Lord had prospered them;"† and it is reasonable to think that the first day was specified as the proper time to make collections for the poor, because it was consecrated to religious duties. It is undoubtedly the same day to which the beloved disciple refers, when he says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day;"‡ the day which Jesus Christ peculiarly claimed as his own, or the first day of the week, which is consecrated to his honour. It has been supposed that the change of the day is predicted in the following words of Ezekiel, when he is giving a description of the mystical temple, which may be considered as a figure of the Christian Church: "Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it; and they shall consecrate themselves. And when these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace-offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord God."§ This language is symbolical; the allusions are to the ceremonial services of the temple. Some-

\* Acts. xx. 7.

† 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

‡ Rev. i. 10.

§ Ezek. xliii. 26, 27.

thing is manifestly predicted which was never literally fulfilled; but, as the whole refers to a new state of things, the mention of the eighth day as the day of solemn sacrifices may well be considered as an intimation that the eighth day in order from the beginning of the Jewish week, or the Christian Sabbath, was henceforth to be holy to the Lord.

If the finishing of the works of creation was a reason why the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it, there is a reason at least equally strong for the consecration of the first day, on which our Saviour rose from the grave. Then the work of redemption was finished; and on account of its greatness and glory, and the unspeakable benefits which it has procured to mankind, it is worthy to be held in remembrance in all generations. The first day of the week is dedicated to the memory of the resurrection, by which God publicly testified that his incarnate Son had finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. And as there will be no new work of the Almighty of superior or equal importance, the day will not be altered, but will be kept sacred to the end of the world.

The Jews were enjoined to observe the Sabbath with the utmost strictness. They were not to go out of their houses, or to take journeys, except to a place of worship; and the distance to which, according to the Rabbies, they might lawfully go, was two thousand cubits, or about two-thirds of an English mile, which is called in the new Testament, a Sabbath-day's journey. They were not to kindle a fire in their dwellings, that is, I presume, for the purpose of dressing victuals; for surely they were not forbidden to kindle a fire to warm themselves. They once deemed it unlawful to defend themselves on the Sabbath; but experience made them change their opinion, although they continued to think it a sin to attack their enemies on that day.

Among Christians, there has been a difference of sentiment respecting the degree of strictness with which the Sabbath should be observed. Some are for retaining all the rigour of the Jewish law, while others insist that now its severity is relaxed; and this view has been adopted by some of the most eminent among the foreign Protestant Divines. It is possible so to overstrain the duties of the day, as to make men think that they can hardly speak, or move, or look around them, without violating its sanctity; and thus to give the Sabbath a gloomy and forbidding aspect. It is possible to grant such liberty, that it shall resemble a human festival rather than a season of devotion, a day of idleness, gossiping, and amusement, mixed up with some religious offices. We know how loosely it is observed in Roman Catholic and many Protestant countries, in the southern division of our island, and even in the northern, although our notions of the sanctification of the Sabbath have been carried as high as by any denomination of Christians.

This precept requires us to set apart for the service of God, one whole day in seven, reckoned, like other days, according to our mode of computing time, from twelve o'clock at midnight to twelve next night. The Jews reckoned from sunset to sunset. It requires us to abstain from our worldly employments, manual and mental, from the labours of the body and the labours of the mind about secular studies, and from all unnecessary words and thoughts respecting such subjects. It requires us to spend the whole time, when we are awake, in devotional exercises, in prayer, religious reading, and meditation, in the instruction of our families, and pious conversation with them and our friends, and in attendance upon the public ordinances of grace. It requires us to abstain from those innocent recreations and amusements by which the body and the mind are refreshed and gratified, because we can very well dispense with them for one day, since we are at liberty to use them on the other six: they would engross a portion of the time which is sacred to other purposes, and would dissipate our thoughts, and indispose us for the proper duties of the Sabbath.



"The Sabbath," our Confession says, "is then kept holy to the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations; but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy."\*

He who understands in what the sanctification of the Sabbath consists, has no need that the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment should be pointed out to him. A detail of them is at least unnecessary at present, when I am addressing those who are capable of tracing the particulars I have mentioned into all their ramifications and consequences.

You would observe that, in the quotation from our Confession of Faith, works of necessity and mercy are not considered as a violation of the sanctity of the Sabbath. By the former, are meant works which could not have been done on the preceding day, and cannot be deferred till the next. We must kindle fires in our houses; we must travel to and from the house of God; we must look after some parts of our property, as our flocks and herds; we must guard it when it is exposed to danger; we must use means to extinguish a conflagration, and carry away goods which would be destroyed by it, or by a sudden inundation. These duties arise from circumstances over which we have no controul. They will not wait till we find time to attend to them, but must either be done now, or not done at all; and as the Sabbath was made for man, they were permitted, although literally they break in upon its rest.

Works of mercy are those which are performed from compassion to our fellow-creatures. The care of cattle may be placed under this head, as well as under the former. No man is required, under the pretext of resting from his works on the Sabbath, to leave them to suffer from hunger and thirst. On the same principle, we may carry food and raiment to the poor, when their demands are urgent and we had not a previous opportunity of attending to them. We may visit the sick, administer cordials and medicines to them, dress their wounds, and perform other offices by which they will be soothed and relieved. It is on this ground that we deem it lawful for physicians to practice upon the Sabbath. It is a gracious institution, designed for the good of man in this world, as well as for his salvation in the next; and it does not interfere with any service immediately called for, which will contribute to either.

The time appropriated to the service of God is one day in seven, and, under the Christian dispensation, the first day of the week. I need not repeat, that there ought also to be a daily worship of God, and that the duties of the Sabbath do not release us from devotion during the week. But this is the only day which God claims as his own in a peculiar sense; he has given us the other six days to pursue our secular employments. It follows, that men have no right to institute holidays, which return as regularly at certain intervals as the Sabbath does in the beginning of the week. This is an assumption of authority which God has not delegated to them. Holidays are an encroachment upon the time of which he has made a free gift to men for their worldly affairs; and although enforced by civil and ecclesiastical laws, they are not binding upon conscience. No man sins in not observing them; but he does sin, if he observe them from an opinion of their holiness. Men may set apart particular days for fasting and thanksgiving; but those are only occasional, and not the days, but the services, are holy. As for all stated days of worship besides the Sabbath, they are human enactments; and there is no obligation upon any man to observe them but the general one, which requires us to conform to the practice of the church, when it is not sinful or superstitious.

The Second table of the law prescribes our duty to man, which is in fact our duty to God, because he enjoins it; but it is called our duty to man, because he is the immediate object of it. The First precept of the second table, which is the Fifth of the Decalogue, is in these words: "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The general design of it is to inculcate relative duties; and in the usual manner, it gives a specimen in the duties of children to their parents. There are various relations subsisting among mankind, which are founded partly in nature and partly in convention. They are naturally related to one another; more generally, as they are sprung from one common stock, for "God has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth;"\* and more particularly, as they are descended from the same immediate or remote ancestors. There are other relations which, although agreeable to nature, or to the constitution and circumstances and wants of men, are yet founded in convention or mutual compact. Of this description are the relations of husbands and wives, masters and servants, magistrates and subjects. The duties resulting from them are comprehended in the precept; and they are made the subject of positive prescriptions, because they are of great importance, intimately connected with the order and happiness of society, and more effectually to secure the performance of them by the authority of religion.

The duty of children to their parents is expressed by honouring them, a general term under which many particulars are comprehended. They ought to love their parents, to reverence them in their hearts, and treat them with outward respect; to obey their lawful commands; to conform to the regulations which they establish in their families; to entertain a grateful sense of all the care and kindness which they have experienced from them; to acknowledge them in any important step which they take; to assist and support them according to their ability, if they are in such circumstances as to be dependent upon them; and to continue their good offices during the joint lives of themselves and their parents. In the early part of life, when children are living with their parents, and are not yet qualified to think and act for themselves, or, although arrived at the years of discretion, are still lodging under their roof, their subjection to their parents is more complete than after they have separated from them, and have houses and families of their own; but at no period are they released from the obligation to treat them with deference and affection, to comply with their reasonable wishes, and to perform such services as the comfort of their parents may require. We have an example in Joseph, who behaved with the utmost respect to his father, and the most solicitous attention to his happiness, after he was exalted to be next in rank to the king. Nature itself dictates the submission of children to their parents; it is enjoined by the laws of all civilized nations, some of which have carried it to excess, as the Romans unquestionably did, by making children as much the property of their father as his cattle, and giving him power to sell them as slaves, and to put them to death; and such was the severity of the Jewish law, that a froward rebellious son was capitally punished.†

The duties of children to their parents draw along with them the duties of parents to their children. There is required a reciprocity of good offices. Parents are bound to take care of their children in early life; to provide food and clothing for them; to give them an education which will prepare them both for this world and for the next, to watch over their morals, encourage them in good, and restrain them from evil; to exercise their authority reasonably and mildly, but firmly; to endeavour to settle them in life; to administer to them the counsels of experience; and, in a word, to consider them as a trust from God, which they ought to manage with incessant vigilance. I will not say,

\* Acts xvii. 26.

† Deut. xxxii. 18—21.



with some moralists, that the rights of parents result from their duties, because they originate in the Divine institution; but I will say, that a parent who neglects his duty to his offspring, ought not to be surprised if they fail in their duty to him, and has no right to complain either to God or to men.

The duties of husbands and wives are understood to be comprehended in this precept, and a detail of them usually constitutes one part of a commentary upon it. I do not say that this is wrong; but I should think that they occur more regularly under the seventh commandment, which, according to the rules of interpretation formerly laid down, by forbidding the violation of the marriage vow, inculcates the duties arising from the conjugal relation.

I proceed therefore to speak of the duties of servants to their masters. These consist in respect for their masters as their superiors, submission to their authority, attention to their interests, honesty, diligence, and fidelity. The extent of their obedience is limited by their previous stipulation, whether expressed in words or established by custom. A general servant is bound to execute all the orders of his master; but a servant engaged for a particular purpose, is bound only to it, and is guilty of no breach of contract when he declines to interfere with another department. There is, however, another limitation of the duty of both a general and a particular servant. A master has no right to command him to do any thing contrary to the laws of the land, and still less to do any thing which the law of God has forbidden; for example, to tell lies, to assist him in injustice or debauchery, to perform any unnecessary work on the Sabbath. With these exceptions, the subjection of a servant to his master is absolute; during the time of their connexion. The Apostle Paul makes use of strong language upon this subject, and it is worthy of attention, that, in his days, servants among the Greeks and Romans were slaves: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men."\*

Masters are bound to fulfil their part of the stipulation, by requiring nothing from their servants but what is just; by exercising their authority with mildness, avoiding every thing harsh in the matter or manner of their commands; by paying their wages, and bestowing the commendation which they have merited by their fidelity; by protecting them from injury and caring for them in sickness; by guarding against entertaining uncharitable suspicions of them, listening to calumnious reports of them, speaking hastily to their disadvantage, and showing an unrelenting, unforgiving spirit when they have committed a fault; and, in a word, by treating them as inferiors who at the same time are their fellow-creatures and Christians. To these may be added the religious duties of masters, who are bound to instruct their servants as well as their children, to excite them to observe the ordinances of grace, to reprove them when they are guilty of sin, and to encourage them in piety and virtue.

In the next place, The duty of subjects to their civil rulers claims our attention. It is evident that the duties of this class, like those of servants, are founded on convention or compact; because, with the exception of parents and children, between whom nature itself has established an inequality, all men possessed of reason are naturally equal in respect of personal rights, and become subject to others, either by violence, which establishes no moral obligation to submission, or by their own consent virtually or explicitly given. It is worthy of attention, that although the Scripture gives its general sanction to civil government, as necessary to the existence and good order of society, it still calls it an ordinance of man;† signifying that it is a human institution, and consequently, that as in the government of masters, its claim to obedience is not established by force but by law. The *jus divinum* of governments, when ration-

\* Col. iii. 22, 23.

† 1 Pet. ii. 13.

ally explained, can only mean that lawful governments have a right to demand the obedience of the subjects, and that it is the will of God that the subjects should submit to their authority. "The divine right of kings," says Paley, "like the divine right of constables, is founded on the law of the land."

There is a considerable difficulty in determining how far the moral obligation of submission extends, because cases may be supposed and questions may be put, with respect to which it is not easy to come to a satisfactory and consistent conclusion. In general it may be said, that no government is lawful which does not exist with the formal or virtual consent of the people. The world has been so long accustomed to look upon civil government as independent of the people, and the notion of legitimacy, as attached to a particular form and a particular family, has been so carefully instilled into their minds, that they are slowly brought to assent to what appears one of the plainest propositions, that a despotic government is an usurpation. Farther, the obedience of subjects is defined by the laws of the land. No man is morally bound to submit to the arbitrary will of an individual, because he is called a king any more than because he is called a master, or to the will of a lawful magistrate when he orders any thing contrary to the law of the land. The moment he steps beyond the boundary of law, he loses his official character, and becomes a private man or a tyrant. Lastly, the obedience of subjects, like that of servants, is restrained by the law of God. When civil rulers presume to command what he has forbidden, or to forbid what he has commanded, they become rebels against the King of kings, and have no claim to our homage.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."\* These words have been understood to favour passive obedience, but in my opinion they have been grossly perverted. How could any man in his senses suppose, that a messenger of truth would teach us to submit tamely to be plundered, and tormented, and destroyed, by persons who, with the titles of royalty, were worse than common robbers and murderers; to surrender to them all that is dear to us as men, all that renders life worth preserving; to abstain from making a single effort to secure to ourselves, and our friends, and our country, the blessings of liberty and equal laws? Is it to be supposed that the God of justice and beneficence has commissioned a few ruffians to pillage and oppress their fellow-creatures, and called upon the latter, under pain of his displeasure, to submit like lambs to the butcher's knife? No; we will make no such supposition, any more than we will suppose that he has forbidden us to use means to stop the ravages of fire, pestilence, or flood, or to employ force to restrain and punish the private ruffians, who with a title equally good, attempt to rob us of our property or our lives. In the passage quoted, the Apostle, without referring to any existing government, or any form in preference to another, lays down the general duty of Christians to their superiors in the state. They are bound to submit; but that it is not blind submission is evident from the reason assigned: "For rulers are not a terror to the good, but to the evil." Again, "he is the minister of God to thee for good."† So far, then, as a government patronizes good works, and punishes such as are evil, so far as it answers the end of its institution by maintaining order and peace in civil society, it is entitled to submission; but when, instead of protecting, it oppresses the people, we can be no more bound in conscience to recognize it as lawful, than we are to acknowledge as a minister of Christ, the man who teaches error in doctrine, and licentiousness in practice.

The duty of subjects is to obey "every ordinance of man for the Lord's

\* Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

† Ib. 3, 4.



sake," to "render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour."\* The duty of civil rulers is to enact just laws, and to execute them impartially; to be the guardian of the rights of their subjects, to maintain order and peace, to patronize arts and sciences, to encourage virtue and discourage vice, so far as their lawful influence extends; to be the fathers of their people, and thus merit their respect and willing obedience.

The duties of the members of the church to those who are over them in the Lord, and the duties which the latter should perform, might be here introduced; but they are so well known, as to render a detail of them unnecessary.

The precept now before us, is called "the first commandment with promise;"† that is, the first in the second table of the law. The promise is contained in these words: "That thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." It is better, I think, to consider this promise as peculiar to the Jewish dispensation, than to attempt to transfer it to the Christian. The law promulgated from Sinai was enforced by temporal rewards, among which long life in Canaan is here held out as the recompense of those who should duly honour their father and mother. It does not appear from the present history of Providence, that the promise is applicable to other countries and nations. Of this our Church seems to have been sensible, when it called it "a promise of long life and prosperity, as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good, to all such as keep this commandment."‡ This is, in other words, to say, that the keepers of it will live long or not as God shall determine, and, consequently, to acknowledge that the promise is not now attached to the precept. The attempts which have been made to show that the promise is still in force, are unsatisfactory, and usually sum up the matter in the same indeterminate manner with our catechism.

The Sixth commandment is; "Thou shalt not kill." Its design is to guard human life against violence, to render it a sacred thing, which is not to be touched but by Him whose gift it is, and who has a right to resume it at his pleasure. A distinction is made between it and the life of the lower animals, in one of the precepts delivered to Noah. Man holds a higher rank in the scale of being; his life is therefore of much greater value, and to take it unjustly away is a crime which ought not to pass with impunity. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man."§

It is plain from the words now quoted, and from other passages of Scripture, that, although the precept is absolute, it is subject to certain limitations. It does not forbid the taking away of the life of a man who has forfeited it by his crimes. The murderer may be put to death; and, by the law of Moses, the same punishment was inflicted upon other transgressors. It is generally agreed that murder should be subjected to a capital punishment; but many doubts have been expressed whether it should be extended to any other offence. The reasoning, indeed, which some employ, goes to abolish all capital punishments; for if the power of civil rulers consists in the surrender which their subjects have made of a portion of their rights for the preservation of the rest, and if no man has such power over his own life as to commit it to the disposal of another, it follows that the jurisdiction of magistrates does not reach the life of their subjects, and is confined to what may affect their personal liberty, their property, and, in general, their state in society. This question is not now before us; nor the question, what end human governments propose by the infliction of punishment, whether they are intended as retributions, or merely as examples *in terrorem*.

\* 1 Pet. ii. 13. Rom. xiii. 7. † Eph. vi. 2. ‡ Sh. Cat. Q. 66. § Gen. ix. 6.

The precept does not forbid the taking away of life in self-defence. When a man is attacked, he is at liberty to defend himself; and if in the conflict the intended murderer shall fall, no moralist would say that the defender was guilty of murder, provided that no means of saving himself were left but the taking away of the life of the aggressor. Surely he was not bound to be more careful of the life of his enemy than of his own. In such a case, the law can afford him no protection; he must use the power which God has given him, to preserve the most valuable of all his possessions, to ward off an injury which can never be repaired. Human laws accord the same right in defence of our property, when an attempt is made to take it from us by violence.

It may be inquired, how far wars, in the course of which there is a loss of many lives, are consistent with this precept? The plain answer is, that they are justifiable only on the plea of self-defence; that we may make war and destroy our enemies when we are unjustly attacked, for we are acting the same part, on a more extended scale, with the individual who resists the house-breaker, the highway-man, and the assassin; but that wars of aggression, wars which have no just cause in the conduct of our antagonist, are unlawful; and that, in the sight of God, every life which is taken away in the prosecution of them is a murder. How much guilt is accumulated upon all the nations of the world! and how dreadful will be the reckoning with the rulers of the earth, when God shall make inquiry after blood!

The precept is justly understood to forbid suicide; and for this reason, that we have not absolute power over our own life, but are bound to retain and employ it to the ends for which it was bestowed, till the gift is resumed by the Giver. Disgust at life will not justify self-murder, because it can exist only in an ungrateful and vicious mind; nor severe affliction, which coming from the hand of God, it is our duty to bear with patience; nor the apprehension of evil, which may not befall us, and to which, if it did come, we should be bound to submit without a murmur. Life is an appointed time, measured out to us by the wisdom of God; it is a race which we must run till we arrive at the goal; it is a conflict which we must sustain till we have obtained the victory.

The prohibition of murder implies a prohibition of all the causes which lead to it; as, envy, malice, revenge, secret wishes of evil to others, and imprecations of it, unjust and excessive anger, duels, and fighting of every kind between man and man. "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not kill: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire."\* An Apostle, speaking in the spirit of his Master, declares, that he who "hateth his brother is a murderer."† The command, not to take away our own life, binds us to avoid not only direct suicide, but every thing which has a tendency to bring it to an untimely end; as, peevishness, and fretfulness, and discontent; immoderate grief; anxious care about our worldly affairs, and labour unnecessarily submitted to beyond our strength; neglect of our bodies, by withholding due nourishment and clothing, and carelessness about our health; intemperance in eating and drinking, and exposing ourselves to danger without a lawful call.

The positive duties are implied in the negative. We ought to use all proper means of preserving our life, for our own sakes, and for the good of those who are dependent upon us, and to whom we may be useful in temporal and spiritual things. We are bound also to endeavour to preserve the lives of others, by warning them of dangers, by rescuing them from perilous circumstances, by ministering to their necessities, by doing what will contribute to render life desirable and comfortable to them,

\* *Math. v. 21, 22,*

† *1 John iii. 15.*



As there is a life of far greater importance than that of the body, the precept may be understood to comprehend the duties which relate to the salvation of our own souls, and those of our brethren: "He that findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death."\* In these words our duty to ourselves is pointed out; and with respect to others who are connected with us, it is only when we endeavour, by our instructions, our example, and our prayers, to turn them from the path of destruction, that we can say with Paul, that "we are free from the blood of all men."

## LECTURE CV.

### ON THE LAW OF GOD.

Commentary on the Seventh, the Eighth, the Ninth, and the Tenth Commandments.—Conclusion from a Review of the Law.

THE Seventh precept is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." As it forbids a sin which can be committed only by married persons, and according to the rules laid down for the interpretation of the law, not only forbids all the sins comprehended under this general term, but enjoins the opposite duties; a detail of the duties of the conjugal relation is more properly introduced in this place, than under the fifth commandment, to which they are commonly referred.

Marriage is an ordinance of God for the increase of the human race, and for other important purposes connected with the comfort and moral improvement of the species. It was instituted in Paradise, where our first parents were united as husband and wife by their Creator himself, and an example was given to be imitated by their descendants. As such it was considered by Adam, who, instructed no doubt by a divine revelation, said on that occasion, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh."†

As only a single pair was created, it appears to have been the intention of their Maker that a man should have only one wife, and a wife only one husband. In this manner Malachi explains the fact, when he says, "And did not he make one?" namely, one woman; "yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? that he might seek a godly seed."‡ Yet we know that polygamy was introduced at an early period, that it was practised by the patriarchs and other pious men, and that it was recognized by the law of Moses, and subjected to regulation. If it was not properly approved, it was tolerated; and we must conclude, that at that period there was not such moral evil in it, if it was at all sinful, as was inconsistent with a state of salvation. The case is finally decided by our Saviour, who has forbidden polygamy. It now admits of no apology; and if a man, professing to be a Christian, should take to himself more wives than one, he would not only incur the penalty of human laws, but expose himself to the displeasure of heaven.

Marriage is the union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. It is founded on mutual consent, and binds the parties to each other for life. As the relation is of great importance, not only to the individuals, but to society at large,

\* Prov. viii. 36,

† Gen. ii. 24.

‡ Mal. ii. 15.

the civil laws have taken it under their cognizance, and prescribed the forms which are necessary to legalize the transaction. This precaution has not been neglected in our own country; but the matter is still left too loose, as consent expressed before witnesses, or even, I believe, in writing, is sufficient to constitute marriage. When the laws have settled the forms, the observance of them becomes indispensable; and as marriage, although a divine institution, is at the same time a civil transaction, a marriage, in contracting which they have been neglected, is not legal and cannot be considered as valid.

Marriage is not a temporary contract, like that between master and servant, but a union of a man and woman for life. They cannot separate at their pleasure, or at the expiration of a definite period. They are bound to adhere to each other during the term of their natural lives, and neither of them is at liberty to enter into a new engagement, without an offence against the law both of God and man. There is one cause, however, which may terminate the relation during their lifetime, namely, the sin forbidden in this commandment. Adultery, whether committed by the husband or by the wife, is a just ground of divorce. It is a direct violation of the marriage vow, giving the aggrieved party a right to demand the dissolution of an engagement which the other has broken, by retracting the pledge solemnly given at its commencement. You will observe, however, that adultery does not *ipso facto* dissolve the conjugal relation; it only invests the sufferer with a right to demand the dissolution of it from the competent authority; if the wife or the husband does not choose to exercise the right, things remain as they were. Another cause which, in this country but not in England, is considered as sufficient to procure the dissolution of the conjugal tie, is the wilful desertion of one of the parties, which means as our law has defined it, the absence of one of the parties for a specified time without any lawful cause. If a man should be absent from his wife for many years on business, or because he was forcibly detained, or rendered incapable of returning, the wife would have no plea for a divorce. Our Saviour has taken no notice of this cause when speaking of the subject; but it is supposed to be countenanced by these words of Paul: "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases."\* As wilful desertion not only implies alienation of affection, but defeats all the designs of marriage, it seems to entitle the injured party to be released from an obligation which the other has violated, and which now serves only as a restraint upon the natural liberty of the innocent.

This precept addresses married persons in the first instance, and forbids the violation of the fidelity which they pledged to each other when they entered into the conjugal relation. It requires mutual affection, cohabitation, the faithful performance of their duty, the avoidance of all temptations to sin, and of all means leading to it, and such care of one another as shall prove effectual, through the blessing of God, to preserve them pure and blameless.

Under the head of adultery, all the kindred sins are forbidden. I may specify, in the first place, fornication, or the illicit intercourse of two unmarried persons of different sexes. The enormity of this crime might be shown from the state of mind which it implies, and from its consequences; but it is enough in this rapid sketch to remark, that it is expressly forbidden as inconsistent with moral purity, and offensive to God. Among the heathens, it was looked upon as a venial sin, or rather as no sin at all, and it was countenanced by the doctrine and practice of their greatest philosophers. This is probably the reason that, in the decree of the council of Jerusalem, it is mentioned along

\* 1 Cor. vii. 12, 13, 15.



with some other things of less importance, from which the Gentiles were commanded to abstain.\*

This precept also forbids incest or sexual intercourse between persons within the forbidden degrees, as between brothers and sisters, uncles and nieces, &c. According to the laws of our country, the prohibition is extended to the corresponding degrees of affinity.

It forbids unnatural lusts, which were practised by the heathens without shame, and defended, or at least not condemned, by such a man as Socrates, but which are now of rare occurrence, and always excite unqualified abhorrence.

It forbids, in a word, all impure actions, all impure words, and all impure thoughts, as sinful in themselves, and as leading to sin. This is our Lord's commentary upon the law: "Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."†

The precept requires us to maintain our own and our neighbour's chastity in heart, speech and behaviour; to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. With this view, we should cultivate a habitual sense of the Divine presence, which enabled Joseph to preserve his innocence, when he was exposed to very powerful solicitation: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"‡ It will be well to remember that his eye is upon us in the most secret place; that the fear of offending him may counteract the most urgent temptation, and check the irregular movements of our hearts. This leads me to say, in the next place, that we should guard against the entrance of evil thoughts into our minds, and immediately expel them if they have entered, and should labour to suppress the risings of unhallowed appetite. He who rolls iniquity like a sweet morsel under his tongue, is prepared to commit it if a fit opportunity shall occur, and Providence shall withdraw its restraints. The man who sports with temptation, and quietly permits or encourages its first advances, is in danger of ultimately yielding to it. The most effectual method to prevent the growth of poisonous fruit, is to destroy the root which bears it.—Again, we should guard against all incentives to those indulgences which are forbidden by this precept, all spectacles which are calculated to excite the irregular movements of appetite, all reading and conversation which may produce the same effect. We should avoid loose and profligate company, whose words and example might taint our minds; we should avoid idleness, which, leaving the mind vacant, exposes it to the inroads of unhallowed sentiments and passions; we should avoid intemperance in eating and drinking, than which nothing is more likely to give appetite the mastery over reason. In a word, we should live in the contemplation of death and the future judgment, and the awful realities of eternity, a just apprehension of which will divest the pleasures of sense of their attractions; and continually offer up our prayers to God for his restraining and sanctifying grace, without which our precautions and resolutions will be unavailing. "Wherewithall shall a young man purify his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy word;"§ by making the word his guide, and depending upon the assistance which it promises. "My son, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus."|| "Once," says Paul to the Corinthians, "ye were adulterers, fornicators, and abusers of yourselves with mankind; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."¶

The Eighth commandment is, "Thou shalt not steal;" and the design of it is to guard property against fraud and open violence. It places a sacred inclo-

\* Acts xv. 29.

§ Ps. cxix. 9.

† Matth. v. 28.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 1.

§ Gen. xxxix. 9.

¶ 1 Cor. vi. 9, 11.

sure around it, into which no person must enter without the consent of the proprietor.

It is unnecessary to engage in an inquiry respecting the manner in which property is acquired. The subject has been discussed by philosophers, and different theories have been proposed and defended. It has been said to have originated in the right of occupancy, or, that he who first took possession of a part of the common field of nature, became its rightful proprietor. It has been founded on the right of labour, that is, it has been supposed that a man, by cultivating a part of the soil, was entitled to claim not only the produce but the soil, as his own. It has been referred to the will of God, who, having created all things for the use of man, gave liberty to every individual to appropriate to himself what was necessary for the supply of his wants. Without troubling ourselves to discuss these theories, we may remark that, in a state of society, property is ascertained by the law of the land. As it points out the various ways in which it may be acquired, and secures it to the rightful possessor, so it determines in all controversies which arise between two or more individuals, who is the rightful owner of a field, a house, money, &c. The sin which the precept forbids is the appropriation to ourselves, by our own act, of that which we know belongs to another. A man would not be chargeable with transgressing it, who should seize another man's property, believing it to be his own, and should endeavour to establish his claim to it at law; although his right was not good, his intentions would not be dishonest. But he is a transgressor, who takes what he knows to belong to another man; and although he have attained the sanction of law by such acts as the unprincipled too often employ, he is a thief or a robber in the estimation of God.

Theft is distinguished into different kinds. There is peculation, or theft of the public money, a crime often committed, and by persons who pass in the world for honourable men, and look down with ineffable contempt upon the obscure culprit, who practises his depredations upon a confined scale. There is sacrilege, or theft of the property of the church or of any thing devoted to the service of God. This crime is comparatively rare, partly because the temptations to it are neither frequent nor great, partly because men are restrained by a sense of religion, and partly because it would cover the guilty with indelible infamy. There is common theft, which is practised daily; and at present abounds to such a degree as to render property extremely insecure. Robbery differs from theft in the manner of committing it. The one is secret and the other open; and robbery is accompanied with violence threatened, or actually employed, to compel a surrender, or to overcome resistance.—All those crimes are forbidden, and they are violations of the laws of God and man. The precept condemns the man of office who fills his purse out of the public treasury, and places him on a level in respect of moral guilt, if it do not degrade him still lower, with the contemptible wretch who goes from house to house pilfering whatever he can find. It condemns neighbours who steal from one another, servants who purloin the goods of their masters, and children who secrete for their own use the property of their parents.

Besides what is commonly reputed theft, there are various other ways in which men may be guilty of transgressing this commandment. It is broken when a man borrows and does not repay. His dishonesty is manifest if he denies the debt, or refuses to make restoration, or takes advantage of some legal quirk to evade payment, or removes to a place where he is beyond the reach of his creditors. But he is also dishonest if he borrows without any reasonable prospect of being able to pay; if he render himself unable by idleness, by extravagant living, by rash speculations, in which he has embarked the property of others as well as his own; or if, having obtained a discharge after partial payment, he does not make full restitution when Providence has placed



him in prosperous circumstances. The commandment is broken by the deceitful arts which are practised in trade; when a man takes advantage of the necessity of another to buy from him or sell to him, at a price which would have been different in different circumstances, or when he takes advantage of his ignorance with the same design; when the buyer depreciates the article of sale contrary to his knowledge, and the seller labours to raise it above its real value; when goods are adulterated, and consequently sold at a price which they would not have brought if their state had been known; when false weights and measures are used, and less is given in exchange than was expected and promised; when bargains are not fulfilled, because there is a prospect of greater gain, and so what really belonged to the purchaser, although he had not obtained actual possession of it, is withheld from him; when payments are made in counterfeit or debased instead of current coin; in all these cases, the precept is as certainly violated, as when direct theft is committed. It is broken, too, when men waste the property of others which is committed to their care, or permit it to be wasted by others; when they suffer it to go to decay, and do not use the means of improving it which are in their power, and which they were bound by their engagements to employ. In this way many are guilty of a breach of the eighth commandment, who do not suspect their own honesty, and would consider themselves insulted, if it were called in question by others. There are many other ways of transgressing this commandment, which it would be tedious to mention.

The duty of those who are guilty, in any form, is to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well. "Let him that stole, steal no more;"\* let him make restitution as far as he has ability and opportunity; and let him guard against temptation to a repetition of the crime, and against all the causes which might lead to it. Besides entertaining a habitual sense of the omniscience and authority of God, which would be an effectual restraint from all sin, let him study to be content with his condition; and if it is attended with inconveniences and privations, let him consider that these are allotted to him by the Supreme Disposer, that it is his duty to suffer with patience, and that he will not be an ultimate gainer by resorting to unlawful expedients for relief. Instead of appropriating to himself any portion of his neighbour's wealth, he ought to regard it as placed within the fence of the Divine law, and feel that he is bound to promote his neighbour's interest by all means in his power, for this is the converse of the negative precept. There are different ways in which this work of love may be performed, as by assisting others in their labours, when attention to our own business will permit; by giving them lessons of prudence and economy; by pointing out to them the best methods of managing their affairs; by warning them of dangers which they do not foresee; and if we are precluded from using any of these means, we always have it in our power to wish them well, and to pray for their prosperity.

"Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good."† If a man has not resources of his own, he must endeavour to provide them by lawful industry, and thus cut off one strong temptation to theft. The crime is most frequently committed by the poor, who cannot work for their daily bread; or by the idle, who will not work, and take this easier method of supplying their wants. Hence it follows that diligence in business is enjoined by this precept. The calling in which we engage must be lawful, because the gain which is acquired by an illicit occupation, is the fruit of a violation either of this or some other commandment, and cannot be sought with a good conscience. It must be carried on by lawful means, by fair and honest industry, to the exclusion of falsehood and fraud, and any encroachment upon the rights and privileges of others. It should be managed with attention, and prudence, and perseverance, because it is only by

\* Eph. iv. 28.

† Eph. iv. 28.

the use of these means that we can reasonably calculate upon success; but moderation should be observed, not only lest our strength be impaired, and life abridged, but that we may not contract an undue attachment to the world, and by fostering the principle of avarice, create a new temptation to dishonesty. The cultivation of spirituality and heavenliness of mind will be an effectual means of subduing covetousness, and preventing the evils which spring from it; for, if we are seeking the true riches, and are fully aware of the vanity of earthly things, we shall be in little danger of going out of the path of duty to obtain them.

Even upon those who cannot work, and are destitute of daily bread, this precept is binding. In an extreme case, moralists have allowed that a man may take as much of a neighbour's property as is necessary to preserve him from perishing of hunger or cold, and assign this reason, that "when property was first established, the institution was not intended to operate to the destruction of any; and therefore, when such consequence would follow, all regard to it is superseded." Be this as it may, the source to which the poor are to look is the charity of others, which they may solicit, but cannot compel, for this is one of those rights which moralists call imperfect, because they cannot be enforced in the course of law. I am speaking of voluntary charity, and not of legal assessments. Their right to charity, however, is perfect by the law of God, who peremptorily enjoins alms, and will punish those who, from inhumanity or selfishness, withhold them. Besides a sense of duty, which should excite us to relieve our indigent brethren, and in aid of which comes the sentiment of compassion towards the sufferers, every man should consider that this is one of the ways in which we may expect our temporal affairs to prosper; for "he that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again." "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."\*

I now proceed to the Ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." The sin which is expressly forbidden is, the giving of false testimony concerning a person when we are summoned as witnesses in his cause by proper authority. This is done when we affirm that to be true, which we know to be false; when we assert as certain what is doubtful; when we give a higher colouring or a deeper shade to a transaction, than is consistent with fact; when we deliberately conceal any thing which would serve to establish the innocence or the guilt of our neighbour. In these and other ways, witnesses may swerve from the truth; and as their evidence, in a judicial trial, is given upon oath, they farther incur the guilt of perjury: "These are the things that ye shall do, Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates."†

But, although the violation of truth in the solemn proceedings of courts is the only sin specified, yet all other sins allied to it, and contrary to the general principle inculcated, are forbidden. We must not bear false witness against our neighbour in common conversation. We must not charge him with a crime of which we know him to be innocent, or pronounce him to be guilty upon reports which we have not verified; we must not form rash judgments of conduct which, upon inquiry, may be found to be right, although appearances at first were unfavourable; we must not impute bad motives to him without sufficient evidence, when there is room for a more charitable interpretation. By this precept, all those are condemned who are called calumniators, slanderers, backbiters, whisperers, evil surmisers; the authors and propagators of injurious reports; those whose business it is to detract from merit, to throw a

\* Prov. xix. 17. xi. 24.

† Zech. viii. 16.



shade upon excellence, and to make virtue suspected; who, as the thief goes from place to place in search of prey, roam about with the nefarious design to commit depredations upon the characters of others. We may violate this precept even when we speak the truth, if we speak it unseasonably, unnecessarily, and from improper motives. We injure the character of our neighbour when we retail his real faults without any call to divulge them; when we relate them to those who have no right to know them; and when we tell them, not to promote any good end, but to make him lose his estimation in society. Many think that they are perfectly blameless if they adhere strictly to truth, not considering that, to a complete moral action, more is necessary than its external conformity to the rule, and that the principle in which it originated may be so vitiated as to convert the action into a sin. Nay, we may transgress this precept when we do not speak at all; for, by holding our peace when something injurious is said of another, we tacitly give our assent, and, by concealing what we know to the contrary, by not bringing forward what would rebut the charge, we become guilty not in a much inferior degree to the first contriver of the calumny. We certainly do not fulfill the law, which says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The design of this precept is to "maintain and promote truth between man and man." Our organs of speech were given for the purpose of expressing it. It is evident that this must have been the design of our Creator, whose ultimate object in subordination to his own glory, was good, to be accomplished by the structure of our bodies, and the constitution of our minds. Without truth there could be no society among men, no friendships, no mutual co-operation, no transactions of any kind; they would be filled with jealousy and distrust, and be reduced to a helpless individuality of existence, destitute of all comfort, and harrassed with perpetual suspicion and alarm. To guard against these consequences, God has planted two principles in human nature,—an instinctive propensity to speak truth, and an instinctive disposition to believe testimony. The former may seem to be inconsistent with the declaration of Scripture, that "the wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies."\* These words do, indeed, import that there is a proneness to duplicity and deceit in human nature, of which there are indications at a very early period; but it is called into action only by particular circumstances, and in general children and fools are proverbial for speaking truth. Truth comes spontaneously from our lips, when there is no motive to utter falsehood; and so strong is the natural connexion between our sentiments and our words, that it frequently escapes from us when it would be our interest to conceal it. Men commonly speak truth, and lie only occasionally. The disposition to give credit to testimony presupposes the former propensity; it assumes that truth is generally spoken; it is strongest prior to experience of deceit, and becomes suspicious and cautious in proportion as that experience is acquired.

But although there is a natural propensity to speak truth, when it is not counteracted by any improper influence, men in their degenerate state do not feel so sacred a regard to it as is sufficient to secure them against temptation. There are frequent violations of it from various causes, against which this precept is directed. Truth may be defined to be the conformity of our sentiments to the nature of things, and the conformity of our words to our sentiments. The precept immediately regards the latter, but not to the exclusion of the former. If it is our duty not to deceive others, it is our duty to take care that we be not ourselves deceived; and consequently, to make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with a subject before we venture to speak of it. But when a man speaks as he thinks, he speaks moral truth; and although he should be mistaken, he is not guilty of a lie.

\* Ps. lviii. 3.

Lies are commonly distinguished into three kinds. First, There are malicious or pernicious lies, or lies the design of which is to do mischief. These are universally condemned. Secondly, There are jocose lies, or lies told for the purpose of amusement and merriment. However common these are, and however lightly they are thought of, a strict moralist will condemn them also, because truth is too sacred to be trifled with. Thirdly, There are officious lies, which are so called, because they are intended to promote the benefit of others. It has been pleaded as an apology for these, that they do no harm, but on the contrary do good; a conscience duly informed, however, does not judge of the morality of an action by its consequences, but by the law; and to do evil that good may come, is a principle which the Scripture has proscribed. Under the same censure are included pious frauds, as they are called, and which began to be practised at an early period; lies told, miracles feigned, books forged, and sophistical reasoning deliberately employed, to advance the cause of religion. Equivocation is another species of falsehood, and consists in the studied use of terms which bear two different senses, in one of which the speaker understands them, while he means them to be understood in the other by the person addressed. He violates truth, because he intends to deceive. It is violated also by mental reservation, which has been justified by Popish casuists, but deserves universal execration, because it subverts all faith and confidence between man and man. It consists in uttering so many words aloud, and then muttering or mentally repeating some more which totally alter their meaning, than which it is impossible to conceive a more deliberate and baser attempt to deceive.

Every man has not a right to hear the truth when he chooses to demand it. We are not bound to answer every question which may be proposed to us. In such cases we may be silent, or we may give as much information as we please, and suppress the rest. If the person afterwards discover that the information was partial, he has no title to complain, because he had not a right even to what he obtained; and we are not guilty of a falsehood, unless we made him believe, by something which we said, that the information was complete. We are at liberty to put off with an evasive answer the man who attempts to draw from us what we ought to conceal. On the ground of the want of a right to truth, some justify false information given to an assassin who is in quest of his intended victim, and false promises made to a robber or a tyrant who has extorted them by violence. It does not serve much purpose to discuss extreme cases, which rarely occur; and it is hazardous to lay down a rule which may in any degree lessen our reverence for truth. We have a choice, when we are exposed to danger, either to sin or to suffer; and if there be any doubt with respect to the lawfulness of an expedient, every man of a tender conscience will take the safer side, by doing what appears to be his duty, and will leave the consequences to Providence.

There can be no doubt that promises voluntarily made and properly qualified are binding. They are binding, according to the sense in which they were understood by the parties at the time when they were made,—binding, in the plain and natural meaning of the terms. But promises are not binding when the performance of them is impossible. This is so obvious as to require no illustration; but it is proper to observe, that the impossibility must have arisen or been discovered after the promise was made; and if the promiser was aware of it at the time, he excited false expectations, and is clearly guilty of a lie. Promises are not binding when the performance would be unlawful. A prior cannot be set aside by a subsequent obligation; and the law of God undoubtedly does not require us to fulfill an engagement by which any of its precepts would be transgressed. A promise is not binding unless it has been accepted. It is the acceptance which constitutes the obligation, and not the simple pro-



mise, which is merely a declaration on the part of the promiser of his willingness to be bound. If I promised to give another a certain sum of money, but he declared that he would not accept of it, I am released. A promise is not binding which was suspended upon a condition, if the condition is not performed. The promiser has lost his right, or rather had no right till his part of the stipulation was fulfilled. In a word, a promise ceases to be binding, when the person to whom it was made releases the promiser from his bond.

The duty enjoined in this precept is, to adhere to truth on all occasions. There are some cases, indeed, in which, although our words, literally understood, do not agree with our sentiments, we do not incur the guilt of falsehood, as in irony, parables, and fictitious narratives; and the reason is, that as we do not intend to deceive, so no person is deceived. The design of the speaker or writer is understood. No man mistakes a romance or a parable for a true history, or supposes irony to be any other thing than a mode of conveying censure under the semblance of praise. But in testimony, in common conversation, and in more formal declarations, our words should be the exact image of our thoughts. It is the character of the man who shall abide in the tabernacle of God, that "he speaketh the truth in his heart."\*

It remains that we should briefly consider the Tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." The direct object of this precept is not our external actions, but the movements of the heart; and hence it appears to be supplementary and auxiliary to the other commandments. They also must be understood to regard our feelings and affections, because they proceeded from him who will not be satisfied with outward obedience; but lest men should not have perceived their extent, and should have pleaded that, in conforming to the letter of the law, they had fulfilled its demands, this precept is added to show its spirituality. The seventh command forbids adultery; but here we find that something more is required than abstinence from the forbidden act, and that the commandment may be transgressed in the heart: "Thou shalt not covet or desire thy neighbour's wife." The eighth commandment forbids us to steal; but this precept shows that the man who would scorn to purloin the property of another, may become criminal in the sight of God by desiring it: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, nor his ox, nor his ass." By forbidding us to desire any thing that belongs to him, it forbids every improper sentiment and feeling excited by the state of his affairs, as envy, rivalry, contests for superiority; and thus aims at eradicating the principle which might lead us to injure him in his person, his character, or any of his rights. It is the safe-guard of all the precepts of the second table; and it comes in at the close, to remind us that the heart must be pure as well as the life.

It is a celebrated and important question in theology, whether what is called in Greek *επιθυμία*, in Latin *concupiscentia*, and in English *concupiscence*, or *desire*, has the nature of sin. Concupiscence is used in different senses. In the first place, It signifies that proneness to evil which is natural to man, and is found even in the regenerated. This the Church of Rome acknowledges to be the matter of sin, or that in which sin originates; but denies it to be sin, and says, that although the Apostle Paul calls it sin, it is not so in itself, but is so denominated, because it inclines to sin. I think, however, that we are much safer in following Paul than the Council of Trent. We cannot conceive any proneness, or tendency, or inclination to evil, in a perfectly innocent being; or such to have been the constitution of human nature, when it was first impressed with the image of its Maker. Although capable of evil, it was

\* Ps. xv. 2.

inclined only to good. An inclination to evil must be itself evil, as an inclination to virtue is a virtuous tendency; and the rule of our Saviour certainly holds in the present case, that the tree is corrupt which bears corrupt fruit. In the second place, Concupiscence signifies the involuntary movements of this habitual disposition; and they are called involuntary, because they are not accompanied with any deliberate act of the mind approving of them and consenting to them, but arise suddenly, in consequence of the presence of a suitable object. These also have been denied to be sinful; but although they do not imply a formal deliberate volition, yet, as they proceed from an evil habit, they must themselves be evil. It will be acknowledged, I presume, that it is our duty to check them; but how could this be, if they were innocent? We can conceive no such thing in our Lord; and every motion of this kind is excluded by his own declaration, that "the prince of this world was coming, but would find nothing in him;"\* no tendency towards sin, no movement of the affections, of which he could take advantage to seduce him. Lastly, Concupiscence signifies fixed, voluntary desire of what is forbidden, which all admit to be sinful.

The latter, therefore, is forbidden in this precept, "Thou shalt not covet, or desire." But it extends farther, and forbids the incipient desire, even before it has obtained the consent of the mind, and consequently the previous state of mind in which it originated; for if the tendency in act be condemned, the tendency in habit is also condemned. The Apostle Paul says, "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."† We cannot suppose him to mean, that he did not know that the deliberate desire of a sinful object was sinful, although there is reason to think that some of the Jewish Doctors of that age made obedience to consist merely in external conformity to the law; yet it is hardly credible that a man who had studied the law so diligently, had entirely over-looked all the notices of its spirituality, and particularly the principle upon which it is founded—love to God and to man. It is probable, that in the passage before us, he refers to the first motions of sin, those involuntary acts of concupiscence of which we have spoken, and declares that it was only by this precept that he came to know them to be sinful. It was when the precept was brought home to his conscience by the Spirit of God, that he made this discovery. Till then, he had believed that all was right as long as he was free from outward sin, or, at least, from the settled and deliberate desire of what was evil.

This precept teaches us how we ought to be affected towards our neighbour. As we should abstain from an open invasion of his rights, so we should harbour no uncharitable disposition towards him, no wish which is at variance with his happiness, and would lead us to encroach upon his honour, and property, and peace. It condemns all dissatisfaction with our lot; and all intentions, as well as endeavours, to change it by any means inconsistent with justice and love to our neighbour, and with entire submission to the will of God.

Contentment with our own condition, is obviously a duty which it enjoins. The reason that we covet the things which belong to our neighbour, is, that we are not fully pleased with the portion which God has assigned to us. A contented state of mind would remove the cause of those irregular affections, which it is the design of this precept to restrain. We see that vanity sometimes produces the effect which should flow solely from religion. Some persons are highly pleased with themselves, and every thing which pertains to them. Their houses, their wives, their children, their property, are so much better than those of others, that they have no wish to make an exchange; and,

\* John xiv. 30.

† Rom. vii. 7.



wrapt up in the dream of superiority, they allow the world to go on in its course, without envying any one, or disturbing any one, except by an ostentatious display of their advantages. This example shows how true contentment, founded on submission to the will of God, would preserve us from transgressing this commandment. If we believed that our condition is such as it ought to be, that it has been arranged by Divine wisdom, and is over-ruled by Divine goodness for our best interests, we should not be grieved at the greater prosperity of others, nor wish to appropriate to our own use any thing which they possess. We should even be pleased with what was our own, and leave others to enjoy undisturbed what God had given to them. The tendency of this precept is to promote the happiness of mankind, as well as the glory of God. If it were engraven upon our hearts, if our thoughts and affections were under its control, there would be an end to the complaints and murmurs, the cares and anxieties, which agitate our minds; and the world would no longer present the disgusting spectacle of a field of battle, where emulation, wrath, strife, deceit, and violence, act their part, men prey upon one another, and all contend who shall be conquerors in the struggle for honour and wealth.

Upon the whole, we see that the moral law is in every respect worthy of its Author. It bears upon it an impression of his holiness; it is adapted to the nature of man; it holds all his faculties in subjection to his Maker, and its aim is to promote piety, and purity, and love.

When we reflect upon the extensive nature of its demands, the spirituality of its precepts, its condemnation of even an irregular thought, its requisition of entire and constant submission to God, of a habitual reference to his will as our rule, and his glory as our end; when we reflect upon the height and depth, the length and breadth of the law, we cannot but be sensible that it is impossible for any man in the present life perfectly to fulfill it. The obedience of the saints is attended with many defects, as they are always ready to acknowledge. "There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."\* The knowledge of the law is sufficient to convince any person, whatever his former notions may have been, that he cannot be justified by it. Hence there is need of a better righteousness than we can supply; and we have all reason to be thankful that the law has been fulfilled and magnified by our Divine Redeemer, and a foundation has thus been laid for the acceptance and eternal salvation of those who had fallen under the curse. "He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." "As by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."†

\* Eccles. vii. 20.

† Rom. x. 4. v. 19.

## APPENDIX.



The following Observations on the Extent of Christ's Atonement, forming part of the Fifty-eighth Lecture, were omitted in their proper place, in Vol. II.

It is an important question, for whom Christ offered his sacrifice; and the answers to it are different. Some contend that he died for all men; and others, that he died for those alone who were given to him by his Father. Of late, we have heard much of a new doctrine, which maintains not only that Christ died for all men, but that, in consequence of his death, all men are actually pardoned. The true Gospel is not, that God for Christ's sake will forgive the sins of all who believe: but that he has already forgiven every man, woman, and child, who is now alive, or shall be in the ages to come. It seems a natural inference, that every man will be saved; but to guard against this mistake, we are informed that, although all men are already pardoned, this act of grace will be of no avail to them, unless they believe that they are pardoned. This faith is of easy attainment, as easy as to believe that the sun is shining at noon; because, if it is true that all men are pardoned, it requires no effort to conclude that, since I am a man, I am one of the number. It is added, indeed, that we shall not enjoy the benefit of this pardon, unless we not only believe, but are sanctified by our faith; but this is going still farther from the genuine Gospel, by making our final deliverance from condemnation depend upon our holiness, and not exclusively upon the atonement of Christ. What a mass of error, contradiction, and absurdity! Here we have a pardon which is not pardon, because it affords no security to the possessor; the guilt of sin taken away, and yet liable to be charged upon the sinner; an act of indemnity passed in his favour, while everlasting punishment is still hanging over his head! Who can receive this doctrine who has learned from the Scriptures that we are "justified by faith," that is, that pardon follows faith, and does not go before it? Who can believe that all men are pardoned, who has read in innumerable passages that "all men are by nature children of wrath;" that "God is angry with them every day;" that "his wrath is revealed from heaven against them;" that it is "coming upon them;" that "the whole world is guilty before him?"\* Would the sacred writers have spoken thus if they had known that all men are already forgiven?

Others, who affirm that Christ died for all men, explain their views in a different manner. He may be said to have died for all, because, in consequence of his death, a dispensation of grace is established, under which all men are placed; a new covenant is made with them, which promises eternal life to sincere, instead of perfect obedience; and such assistance is afforded to them as, if rightly improved, will enable them to work out their salvation. To every person who understands the Scriptures, it will be evident that this scheme is false in all its parts, and consequently, that the doctrine which it is brought forward to support, is destitute of any solid foundation. If this is the sense in which Christ died for all, he did not die for all, because the scheme is a gross and manifest perversion of the Gospel. The fundamental error of the advocates of universal redemption lies in an inaccurate idea of the nature of an

\* Eph. ii. 3. Ps. vii. 11. Rom. i. 18. Eph. v. 6. Rom. iii. 19.



atonement. We have shown that it consisted in vicarious suffering, the suffering of one in the room of another. The one bare the sins of the other; the one suffered that the other might not suffer. From the application of the terms of the ancient law to the death of Christ, it appears that his death was a sacrifice of the same kind with those which had been offered by Divine appointment from the beginning; that he was the substitute of sinners; that their guilt was imputed to him; that he bore the punishment to which they were exposed; and bore it with this design, that they might not be punished. In consequence of having offered a sacrifice, the Israelite, who had transgressed, was acquitted, the penalty was not executed upon him. Must not this be the effect of the sacrifice of Christ? Must not those for whom it was offered be freed from condemnation? Does not justice require that they should be dismissed with impunity, since it has already received full satisfaction? The surety has paid the debt, and shall the debtor himself be called upon to pay? No; the claim of the creditor has ceased; the debtor is under no obligation to him, and is as free as if he had never owed a single farthing. If, then, Christ died for all men, it necessarily follows that all men will be saved. The inference is obvious, and cannot be evaded. If an atoning sacrifice was offered for all men, all men must be forgiven. Will God punish sin twice, first in the person of the Surety, and then in the persons themselves, in whose place he stood? It will be acknowledged, without a dissenting voice, that in any other case this would be a manifest injustice. But, "is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid: the Judge of all the earth will do right." Either then all men will be finally saved, or Christ did not die for all. But few will be so bold as to maintain, no person who has any reverence for Scripture will maintain, universal salvation; and to be consistent, he ought also to renounce the doctrine of universal redemption.

Our Lord, speaking of those for whom he died, calls them his sheep. "I lay down my life for the sheep."\* He explains who his sheep are by saying, that they are such persons as "hear his voice and follow him;" and he adds, "that he gives to them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand."† Does it not plainly follow from his words, that those for whom he died shall be saved, that he died for none but those upon whom the gift of faith should be bestowed? And does he not signify, by particularizing them as the persons for whom he laid down his life, that he did not die for others of an opposite character? If he died for all, there would be no meaning in saying that he died for his sheep, because in this case there would be nothing peculiar to them, nothing by which they were distinguished from any other description of men. Again he says in his solemn prayer to his Father, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine."‡ He prayed for the disciples, and not for them alone, but for those in all ages and places who should believe on him through their word; but he did not pray for the world. Intercession is a part of the priestly office of Christ, as well as sacrificing; and it may be assumed as certain, that the same persons are the objects of both. On what ground could we suppose, that his sacrifice embraced a wider range than his intercession, that he willingly shed his blood for the redemption of some, but afterwards declined to pray to his Father for them. It was not so with the Jewish priests, who were types of him, for they bore the names of all the tribes on their breastplate, when they went into the holy of holies, and represented all without exception, for whom the annual atonement was made. So also does Christ. He intercedes for those whose sins he bore in his own body on the tree, and therefore, as he does not intercede for all men, he did not die for all. This argument may be considered as conclusive, till some better

\* John x. 15.

† Ib. 3, 4.

‡ John xvii. 9.

reason is given, why Christ prayed for his disciples, but would not pray for the world.

It is acknowledged there are some passages which seem to favour the doctrine of universal redemption; but if there are others which represent the design of his death as limited,—and it has appeared from the nature of the case, that his sacrifice was not offered for all, since all are not forgiven,—we must endeavour to give a consistent sense to the former passages, and show that Scripture is in harmony with itself. It is said that Christ “taketh away the sin of the world,”\* and is “the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.”† But in these, and some other places, the *world* does not signify every individual of mankind, but the nations in general, as distinguished from the Jews, who were long the peculiar people. It is said again, that Christ “died for all;” but the meaning is explained by the words which follow, “that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again;”‡ and they signify that by *all* we ought to understand, not all men without exception, but all those who are made spiritually alive by his death, and consecrated to the service of their gracious Deliverer. It is farther said, that he “gave himself a ransom for all.”§ But if every individual of the human race is meant, it necessarily follows that, the ransom being paid, all must be redeemed from the bondage of sin and the curse of the law, unless we are prepared to admit that, in respect of many, he died in vain. By *all*, and *all men*, mentioned in another verse,|| it appears, on considering the passage, that the Apostle included persons of every tribe, rank, and condition; Jews and Gentiles, high and low, rich and poor. Once more, it is said, that “by the grace of God he tasted death for every man;”¶ but although the language is strong, and seems to be conclusive, some of the advocates of universal redemption honestly acknowledge that it does not prove the point; and that there is a reference to the “many sons” mentioned in the following verse, whom the Captain of our salvation was appointed to bring to glory;—he tasted death for every one of them. It would be tedious to go over all the passages in which the universality of the atonement is supposed to be taught. I shall conclude with this observation:—That the sacred writers do not always use universal terms, in the strict and usual sense; that the *world* sometimes signifies a *part of the world*, and *all* is put for *many*; and that it is not by such terms that we are to determine the extent of the atonement, but by a view of the whole case and all its bearings.

\* John i. 29.  
§ 1 Tim. ii. 6

† 1 John ii. 2.  
|| Ib. 4.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 15.  
¶ Heb. ii. 9.





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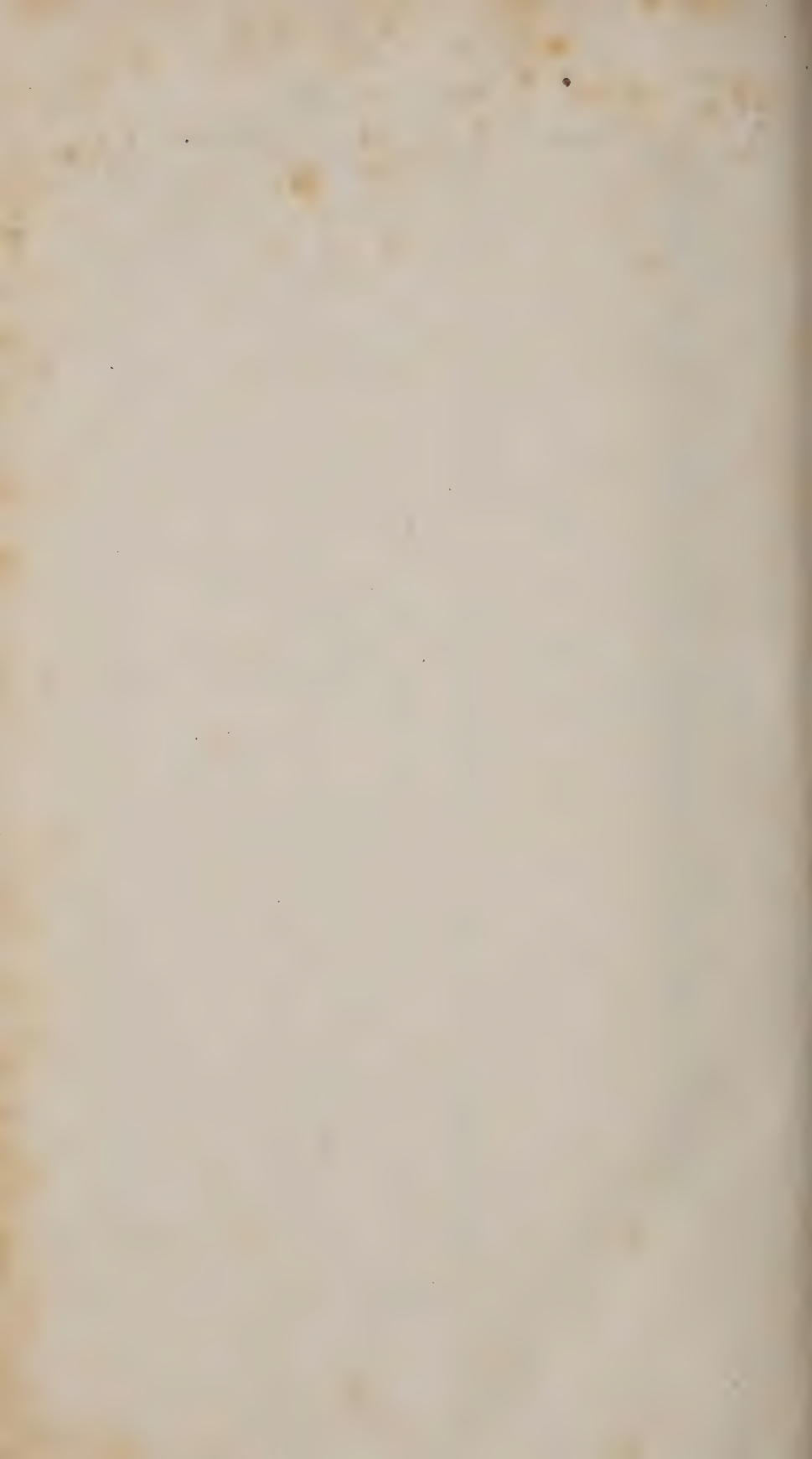
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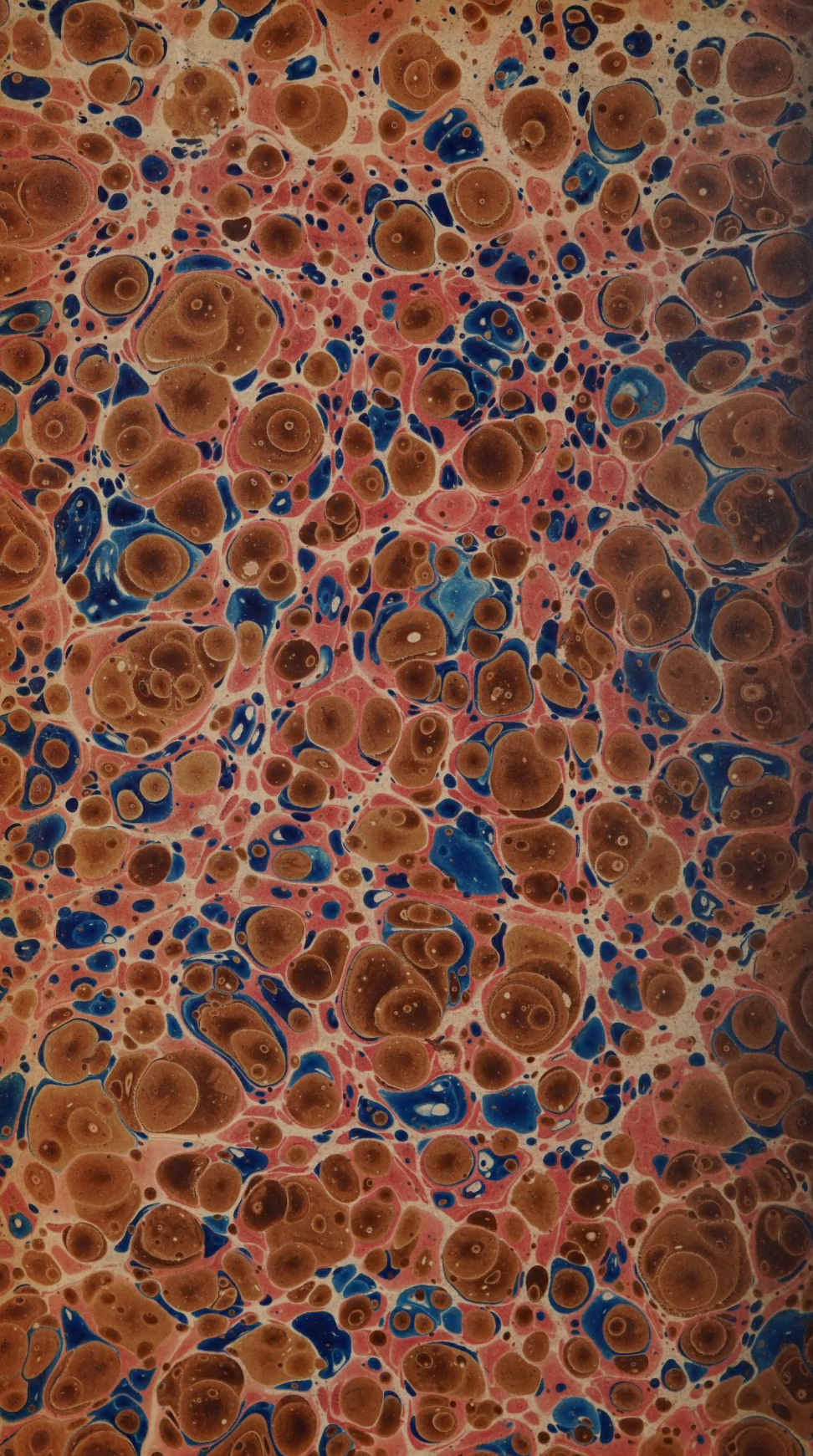




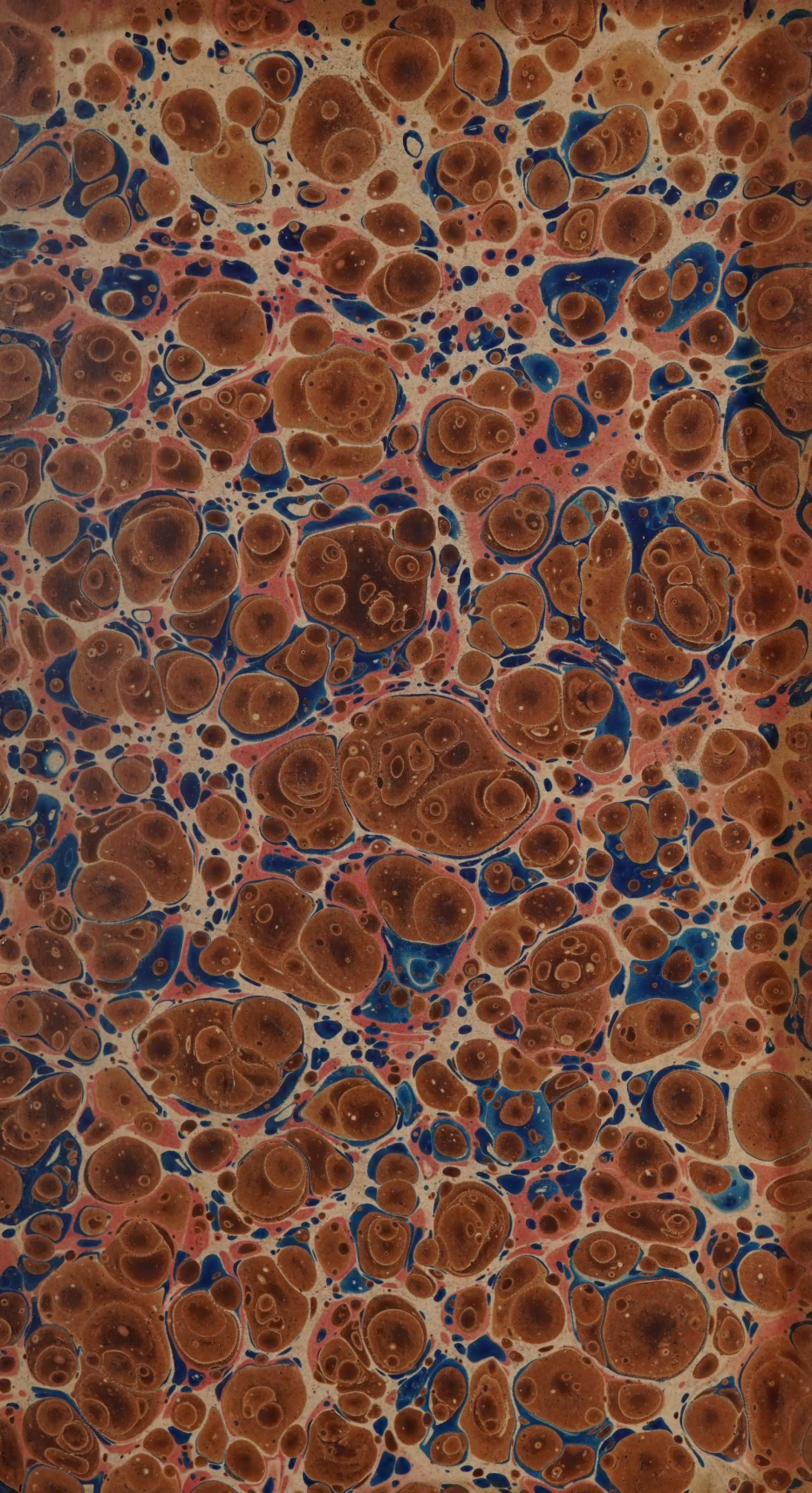














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